

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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TRIBUTE
MAGAZINE**

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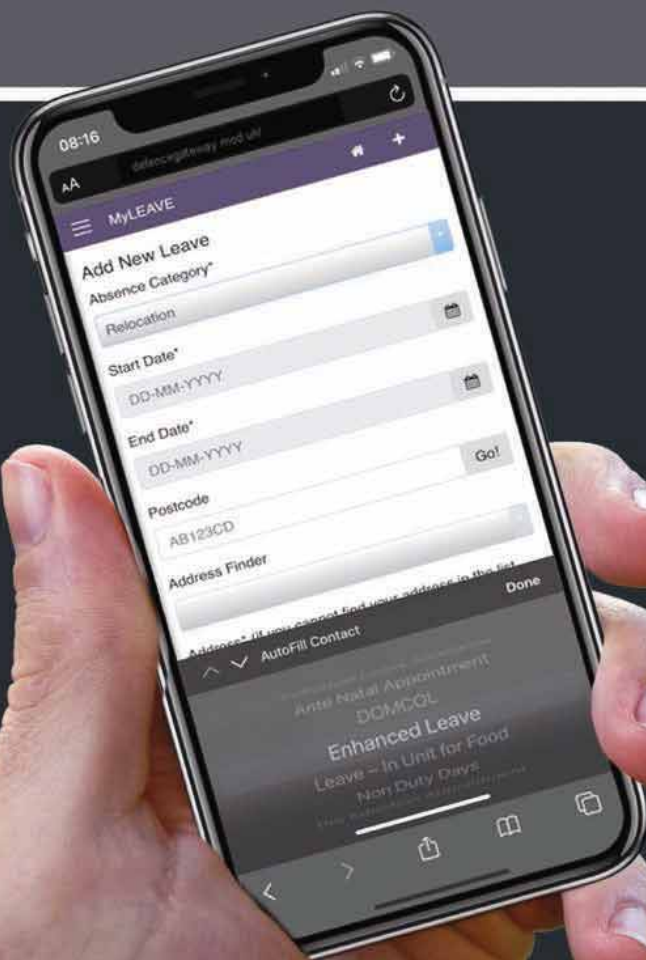
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ARMY
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Picture: Heritage Images

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It is
hardcore to
be honest,
but the
troops here
are doing
really well
”

Battlefront basics – page 30

“
My only
regret is not
recognising
my problems
sooner
”

Now is the time to act –
page 24

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Fond farewell



AS THE military enters a new era dominated by innovation, integration and technology, we say goodbye to

a royal who represented something of a bygone age. And it's one that we shouldn't forget.

The Duke of Edinburgh was a man of unwavering loyalty to both Queen and country as well as the British Army, and we mark his close relationship with this Service in a special 44-page tribute magazine that is supplied with this issue.

Prince Philip was one of an ever-diminishing number of Second World War veterans. And he didn't just serve, he saw action – up close.

He even saved the lives of comrades through an admirable display of ingenuity (turn to page 26 of our commemorative supplement for details).

As a self-confessed engineering nerd, he was no doubt fascinated by the robotics, AI and stealthy surveillance systems that are increasingly prevalent in the Armed Forces.

But he, like many, would have known from first-hand experience that while technology can make a difference, nothing can replace the determination, judgement and quick thinking of highly-trained personnel.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

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Picture: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC

Flawless and fitting farewell

British troops salute Duke of Edinburgh with outstanding ceremonial display

SERVICE personnel showed the consummate professionalism for which they are globally renowned at a moving funeral ceremony for the Duke of Edinburgh.

Watched by an estimated UK television audience of 13 million, soldiers displayed a deep affection for Prince Philip as they saluted his decades of duty.

Textbook drill and pinpoint ceremonial precision accompanied the service at St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle as the Duke's coffin was interred in the royal vault.

The Army's pride shone throughout. Alongside the other Armed Forces, all ranks rose to the occasion in giving the Duke a fitting farewell with the eyes of the world upon them.

While the occasion was deeply solemn, it also celebrated an individual who adored the corps and regiments with which he had special relationships. Many of them played a key role in commemorating Prince Philip's life, including The Rifles; 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards; The Queen's Royal Hussars and The Highlanders, 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

Taking place on the afternoon of April 17, the funeral began with the coffin being carried on a modified Land Rover Defender.

The special hearse was looked after by two NCOs from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, of which the Duke had been colonel-in-chief.

Driver Cpl Louis Murray, who is based at The Prince Philip Barracks in Lyneham, summed up the sense of occasion as a "great privilege and a once-in-lifetime thing".

He added: "I am proud and I know my family are too."

Troops from The Queen's Company of the Grenadier Guards took on the role of royal bearer party, making an immediate mark with their drill. »

“It was a great privilege”



HRH The Prince Philip,

Duke of Edinburgh

1921 – 2021



The Household Cavalry
at St George's Chapel



The Queen's Company
bearer party



» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

The eight individuals in the group responded with total attention to detail as they carried their former royal colonel on his final journey.

Maj James Taylor, captain of The Queen's Company, stressed that perfection was critical. He kept a close eye on the bearer party, commanded by Lt Alec Heywood – a third generation Grenadier whose grandfather took part in the funeral of King George VI in 1952 and the Queen's Coronation.

As the procession made its way towards the chapel for the service, soldiers from The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery fired three First World War-era 13-pounder guns every minute.

Meanwhile, a guard of honour from The Rifles performed a royal salute: the Duke had requested the outfit play a special role during his funeral.

Maj Tom Brown, captain of the guards, said the troops had been drawn from across five battalions and were honoured to play a part.

With Prince Philip also having been royal colonel of The Highlanders, and with strong links to its antecedent regiments, personnel from the Catterick-based outfit got a prominent role during the funeral.

Crucially, they provided fitting music, with Pipe Major CSgt Peter Grant performing during the event.

The Serviceman said it was "the greatest honour of my career" and that he had been humbled by praise for his funeral lament (see right).

The service, conducted by the Dean of Westminster David Hoyle and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, showed a huge depth of feeling for the Duke from soldiers of all ranks.

He had been a feature of life for generations, not only as a ceremonial figure but as someone who had himself seen armed conflict.

Decorated with a Mention in Dispatches while serving in the Royal Navy during the Second World War, he understood military life.

Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, simply and succinctly summed up the royal's unique standing: "He was one of us". ■



“The award is held in high regard”



Scheme legacy will live on

Duke's initiative set to flourish among young soldiers over coming years

THE Duke of Edinburgh's Award could soon be made available to troops across all of the Army's initial trade training establishments.

Having been part of military life for a number of years – particularly in the Army Cadet Force – the Service's top brass want more youngsters to get access to it.

A trial will soon begin at the Defence Schools of Electronic and Mechanical Engineering and Communications Information Systems, both in Lyneham.

Commander Home Command and Standing Joint Commander (UK), Lt Gen Sir Tyrone Urch, is the Army champion for the programme.

He is keen to see its legacy continue after the death of its founder.

"I am very clear on the superb benefits it offers," he said.

"For the soldier, it helps them develop as individuals and leaders. And for the Army we get even more capable and confident people taking their part in teams on operations."

The personal development scheme is open to those aged 14 to 25.

As well as boosting skills such as communication, leadership and



More junior personnel could access the award in future

Picture: Graeme Main

teamwork through various tasks, it is also recognised by universities and civvy street employers.

Maj Nick McEntee (REME), who helps to deliver The D of E Award, said the roll-out would be a "massive win" for the organisation.

"This is a great platform for soldiers to step up and show the chain of command what they are made of," the Serviceman (pictured left) explained.

"In the past, some in the Army have looked upon this as schoolboy stuff.

"But it is held in high regard as a qualification in civvy street; there are a number of employers who will guarantee interviews if you have this."

MAKING MEMORIES

■ BOSSES at The Duke of Edinburgh's Award are urging soldiers who have taken part in the scheme to share their experiences.

"The incredible legacy of the Duke of Edinburgh has empowered millions," Chief Executive Ruth Marvel explained. "We want to bring together stories as a powerful tribute to His Royal Highness."

Troops who have completed the initiative include adventurer Maj Levison Wood, who served as a Regular in The Parachute Regiment for six years and is now a Reservist with 77 Brigade.

Described by Prince Philip as a "do-it-yourself growing up kit" at its launch in 1956, the scheme is even considered by the Army officer selection board.

Share your memories at dofe.org



The Duke with scheme participants

Op Forth Bridge

The military tribute in pictures



Floral tributes

left outside Windsor Castle by the public

Dress rehearsals

at Brunswick Lines, Pirbright





Reservists from 104 Regiment, Royal Artillery fire the death gun salute at Cardiff Castle



Picture: Sgt Ben Beale, RLC

Death gun salute 'honour'

MILITARY personnel across the country and further afield marked the passing of the Duke of Edinburgh with the firing of death gun salutes.

On land and at sea, batteries fired a round every minute for 40 minutes from 1200 on the day after Prince Philip's death.

In London, The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery rode out from their base at Woolwich Barracks, onto the parade ground with 71 horses – 36 of which pulled six 13-pounder field guns dating from the First World War (below, right).

They were the same guns used during his wedding to the Queen in 1947, as well as the Coronation six years later.

"It was a privilege for all those from The King's Troop to commemorate the

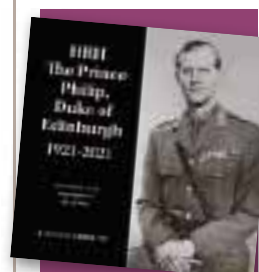
passing of the Duke of Edinburgh," said Maj Victoria Flood, who commanded proceedings at Woolwich Barracks. "It was a responsibility we did not hold lightly and one that was an honour."

The Honourable Artillery Company's light guns fired their salute at the Tower of London and units from all corners of the UK followed suit.

These included the gunners of 105th Regiment, Royal Artillery who performed the role at Belfast's Hillsborough Castle and Edinburgh Castle, while 104th Regiment, Royal Artillery paid their respects outside Cardiff Castle.

The Royal Gibraltar Regiment fired rounds on the overseas territory and guns were also fired from Royal Navy saluting warships.

“It was a responsibility we did not hold lightly”



Read more about the Duke's contribution to the British Army in our one-off tribute magazine, distributed with this edition

PERSONAL POIGNANCY

■ PERHAPS the most moving moment of Prince Philip's funeral ceremony was when Pipe Major CSgt Peter Grant (Scots) performed *Flowers of the Forest*.

The song is the funeral tune of The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

CSgt Grant (pictured below), who has been a piper since the age of seven, said the privilege of being involved in the ceremony for his royal colonel offset any nerves.

He explained: "There was a lot of pressure prior to playing and I think that was because I was well aware that the cameras were about to broadcast my performance to millions of people around the world. But I prepared well and I had confidence in my instrument."

"When it came down to the moment, my sense of sadness for Her Majesty and the royal family kept me on track to do my job."

"My sole focus was to play well for everybody at the service."

"Everyone just wanted to do their best for His Royal Highness; the cameras became an afterthought."

However, the overriding feeling for this Serviceman was one of personal sadness.

He continued: "I have grown up with the Duke of Edinburgh in my life for as long as I can remember."

"The village which I come from is near to Balmoral Castle, so he was always close to me, whether I was at home or at work."



Members of The Highlanders, 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and the Household Cavalry



Death gun salutes by The Honourable Artillery Company at Tower Bridge and The King's Troop in Woolwich



Pictures: Graeme Main, PO (Photo) Dave Jenkins, RN; Cpl Danielle Dawson, RLC; Cpl Cameron Eden, RLC; SAC Tom Carr, RAF

GLOBAL SITREP

1. TEXAS

TRANSATLANTIC TEST

SOME 1,300 British troops have had their planning and coordination skills tested during large scale multinational training in the United States.

The soldiers from 3rd (UK) Division were pitted against a well-equipped mock enemy as their HQ dealt with conventional conflict serials on Exercise Warfighter.

They joined American and French colleagues for the ten-day package – the largest of its type for three decades – at Forts Hood and Bliss.

Despite counter-Covid protocols requiring troops to isolate beforehand, manoeuvres started on schedule, immersing participants in a transatlantic simulation of high-intensity ops.

Maj Gen Mike Elviss, general officer commanding the British contingent, said: "Working alongside our closest allies and leveraging our relative strengths makes us more lethal – it is fundamental for us to train as we would fight."



1. TEXAS

2. ST VINCENT

VOLCANO RESPONSE

CARIBBEAN-BORN soldiers and veterans have teamed up to gather emergency supplies for those affected by the eruption of La Soufriere.

The volcano – which had lain dormant since 1979 – began spewing ash over large parts of St Vincent and the Grenadines last month, leaving many without power and water and forcing 20,000 people into temporary shelters.

In response, veteran Nally Pierre (ex-REME) set up the Help SVG UK appeal and, together with serving troops, the group filled three containers with essential items.

Pierre's brother, Sgt Amnon May (RA), said members of the diaspora felt a strong urge to assist.

"Our country is tackling both Covid and a natural disaster," he added. "At times we feel helpless because we're not there going through the struggle, but it's amazing how this is bringing people together."

With the duration of the crisis unclear, the group aims to send one container per month, for the next six months. Meanwhile members of 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment are raising money for the appeal and the unit's headquarters has allocated funds to support its Vincentian soldiers and their families.



Help SVG UK is collecting clothing, food, blankets, toiletries, basic medicines and more.

Email helpsvguk@gmail.com or contact

Sgt May on 07841 689337 for further information.

To donate cash visit [gofundme.com](https://www.gofundme.com) and search "Help SVG UK"

2. ST VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

3. FALKLAND ISLANDS

3. FALKLAND ISLANDS

GAME ON

MILITARY personnel locked horns with opponents from the British overseas territory's civvy community in a hotly contested sporting showdown.

The annual Stanley versus Mount Pleasant Complex Games saw troops battle a team from the islands' capital in ten events ranging from football to bowls.

But the Servicemen and women found themselves roundly trounced by the opposition, who took the competition's Challenge Trophy after claiming victory in seven disciplines.

Mike Summers, chair of the territory's sports council, said the games – which have now been held three times – were proving increasingly popular.



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7. CYPRUS JUMP START

AIRBORNE sappers topped off a stint carrying out repairs at a Mediterranean skydiving venue by taking part in some celebratory freefall jumps.

The troops – who were on the island for a shakedown of trade skills – enjoyed the familiar activity after building a new hut at the Kingsfield Parachute Club.

The 70-strong contingent of Woodbridge-based soldiers – from 9 Parachute Squadron, 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment – also beefed up the force protection infrastructure at RAF Akrotiri during their tenure on the island. They additionally carried out renovations at the Episkopi Families Centre.

6. GERMANY GETTING COMPETITIVE

TRIALS of kit that allows troops to compare their performance in training are taking place in Sennelager this month.

The MyMimir system will be tested by around 30 soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh during Exercise Tallinn Dawn – part of their preparations for Operation Cabrit.

Named after a figure from Norse mythology, the tool is similar to running app *Strava* in that it lets users track progress, as well as encouraging friendly competition.

It is an individualised version of Mimir – software already in use that gathers data on how units perform during collective training.



Picture: Cpl Jules Packer, RLC



4. GIBRALTAR BY LAND AND SEA

PERSONNEL from The Royal Gibraltar Regiment were among the participants in a maritime force protection exercise designed to demonstrate the territory's ability to serve as a strategic operational hub in the Mediterranean.

The test followed the release of the Integrated Review and featured a number of military and civilian units including the Royal Navy Gibraltar Squadron, the Royal Gibraltar Police and HMS Trent.

The Queen's Harbour Master Lt Cdr Alastair Ley said: "This exercise will be the first of many that aims to develop further the current doctrine and procedures, as well as expanding and strengthening the very good working relationship between both the military and civilian security assets on the Rock."



Picture: Cpl Connor Payne RAF



5. GHANA BOMBS AWAY

A SHORT term training team drawn from across 7th Infantry Brigade completed a three-week stint supporting Ghana in developing its counter-IED capability.

Led by members of 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, the seven-strong contingent was spread around locations in the northern and Ashanti regions, as well as the capital Accra, where they helped recently qualified Ghanaian instructors deliver their first two courses.



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FALCH O GEFNOGI'R
RHAI SY'N
GWASANAETHU

Troops from 2 Para will jump into Estonia in the exercise's early stages



Picture: Cpl Rob Kane, RLC

Defender set for take-off

ONE OF the largest military exercises in years has kicked off and will continue until mid-June.

Defender 21, a series of multinational, joint manoeuvres designed to build readiness and interoperability between Nato partners, involves nearly 30,000 troops from 27 nations conducting operations in a dozen countries.

It spans the Balkans and the Black Sea region and uses key ground and maritime routes that bridge Europe, Asia and Africa.

The exercise is made up of several distinct phases – the first of which will see personnel from 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment train in Fort Bragg with their counterparts from

America's 82nd Airborne Division before flying to Estonia and jumping in as a joint force.

Starting from mid-May, more than 5,000 troops from eight countries will take part in live-fire training and a joint logistical operation that hinges around the British Army's 104 Logistic Support Brigade.

The formation is acting as the theatre enablement group, working closely with the US Army's 21 Theatre Sustainment Corps to offload assets in Greece, Albania, Slovenia and Croatia.

Following that, 3rd Battalion, The Rifles will be working with units from Turkey to move into Romania and conduct a joint allied power demonstration on June 1.

IN NUMBERS



30,000

multinational troops involved in the test, which ends in June

■ PERSONNEL from 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps helped to enhance an important habitat for coastal birds on an island in Portsmouth harbour. The soldiers transported 56 tonnes of aggregate on a Mexeflote landing raft, before it was lifted to the remote Pewit Island by a Royal Air Force Chinook. It will help restore and improve breeding and roosting areas for a range of species. Cpl Adam Brighthouse (RLC), coxswain of the raft, said: "It is great to showcase what the Mexeflote can do so close to home."



LOGGIES BOOST ISLAND LIFT

View from the GROUND



We asked Brig Joseph Chestnutt, Commander 104 Logistic Support Brigade, about the challenges of Exercise Defender 21

Soldier: How many of your troops are taking part?

Brig Chestnutt: More than 200 high-readiness specialist logisticians have deployed.

Soldier: What are the main hurdles you've faced?

Brig Chestnutt: It's a massive logistical task – all done under Covid-compliant restrictions. Operating in an austere and dispersed environment that spans across the southern Balkans, even our most experienced soldiers will be tested. It's a great opportunity.

Soldier: Give us an idea of the scale of the package?

Brig Chestnutt: Our specialist drivers are partnered with US colleagues, projecting forces and equipment forward from the ports to more than 30 exercise areas. In one example, 9 Regiment RLC will run ports and airports dispersed along the Adriatic, Ionian and Aegean coastlines. From Croatia through to Slovenia and down to Greece, the regiment's lines of communication extend the equivalent of London to Edinburgh and back again. And in the heart of Albania, elements of the brigade's command team have also embedded with a US divisional tactical headquarters controlling the inflow of people and materiel.

Soldier: How important is it?

Brig Chestnutt: It's a chance to strengthen the bonds between UK, US, Albanian, Slovak, Croat and Greek soldiers. Working with the Americans and alongside Nato allies and contractors, it fosters cooperation, increases stability and demonstrates our enduring commitment to Nato and its strategic partners.

Pictures: SAC Hannah Smoker, RAF

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The UN mission in South Sudan saw its Covid response boosted by the Army's presence

Picture: Gregorio Cunha/UNMISS

Committed to their causes

Service personnel receive high praise in the latest op honours

FROM efforts to repatriate British nationals stranded abroad during the Covid-19 outbreak to valuable contributions to multinational missions, Army personnel have had their exemplary commitment rewarded in the latest operational honours list.

Among the recipients is Surg Lt Col Jedge Lewin (RHG/D, pictured right), who said the award of an OBE for his part in the United Nations mission in South Sudan was a "huge shock".

The doctor played a key role in the fight against coronavirus, with his citation praising the "exceptional quality" of his medical guidance.

As the outbreak unfolded, the 52-year-old was appointed to the mission's Covid-19 advisory group and helped form a response policy that covered more than 30,000 personnel and civilian staff from 73 nations.

"Once the pandemic took off it created problems in terms of the patients we had," Surg Lt Col Lewin told *Soldier*. "The borders were closed, which meant getting them out of the country for further care was difficult."

"I was really out of my comfort zone; it was very different to serving with just one unit or battalion."

His remit covered five military hospitals, where he addressed capability deficiencies that included critical gaps in oxygen supply.

"I had a very small team, and we were trying to do our best at a time when there was very little guidance,"

the officer said. "But it was fascinating to work with people from hugely different backgrounds and countries."

Elsewhere, an engineer who helped save lives by deterring insurgent attacks in Kabul said he was "taken by surprise" at the award of a Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service, adding that "it was a reflection of the team I worked with".

Capt Oliver Lewis (RE) from 66 Works Group led a project to complete an outer ring of security checkpoints that are bolstering the city's fortified green zone, which houses foreign embassies, Nato's headquarters and coalition personnel.

"It was one of the most challenging tasks I've faced and a frustrating environment to work in at times, but that made it more rewarding," he said. "The enhanced security zone consists of checkpoints on the main routes, with barriers that protect those inside."

"One significant challenge was gaining consent for these posts."

"It's a balancing act because if you have checkpoints in certain places, they may affect traffic flow and the local police can object, but having them elsewhere may not make sense, so you have to find a compromise."

With coalition forces pulling out of Afghanistan this year, the significance of the task is not lost on the officer.

He added: "Hopefully, our work will help put the government in the best place to continue using it effectively."

“I was really out of my comfort zone”



STANDOUT
THE MEN'S FASHION STORE

LAST month's clues would have been an easy spot for those aware of the work of Bowel Cancer UK. (Jeremy) Bowen, (Matt) Dawson, (Tom) Hardy and (Matthew) Wright are among the charity's many patrons.

This month we've teamed up with fashion store Standout (standout.co.uk) to give readers the chance to win a £200 menswear voucher to spend online.

Whether you choose to treat yourself to new outdoor-ready kit from Berghaus or items from Calvin Klein or The North Face, Standout's collection of the freshest clothing has all bases covered.

As one of the leading UK menswear retailers it stocks an extensive array of well-known brands, from Lacoste to G-Star and many more in between.

To be in with a chance of winning, tell us what links the clues on the spine of this month's magazine.

Answers – including daytime phone number – to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by May 28.

WIN
Fashion voucher worth £200

And the winners are...

ARMY personnel featured prominently in the latest list of operational honours and awards, with 15 of the 19 accolades going to soldiers. The recipients are:

OBE – Col Douglas Bowley; Surg Lt Col Jedge Lewin (RHG/D)

MBE – Maj Romesh Chinnadurai (RLC); Maj Damien Mead (Scots); Maj Dominic Dias (RE)

Mention in Dispatches – LCpl Michael Cameron (RAMC); LCpl John Wardle (RAMC)

Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service – Lt Col Sam Cates (Rifles); Cpl Modou Faye (AGC (SPS)); LCpl Anne Gowdy (Int Corps); Lt Col Robert Kace (RDG); Capt Oliver Lewis (RE); Lt Col William McKeran (Int Corps); WO2 Paul Nancollis (Rifles); Maj Simon Pierson (R Signals)



Ground view

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Gav Paton, offers his take on Service life...

READERS of this column will know that mental wellbeing is a subject close to my heart.

I take my hat off to anyone in the Army who talks about their experiences because it really does make a difference.

We've done a lot to break down stigma, but we can't stop.

We all have a responsibility, every day, to look out for each other.

With Mental Health Awareness Week taking place this month, I'm actively encouraging people to remember the mnemonic "Aid" – ask, intervene, disclose.

No one knows your mates better than you, so we need to get over our embarrassment about having difficult conversations.

Even though it might feel awkward, ask people if they are okay – it could save someone's life.

I've done it personally with soldiers who have spoken to me and I've consulted mental health professionals to make sure I was doing the right thing.

I'll also be discussing issues around mental health during a session with regimental sergeant majors and our mental resilience team on May 6.

RSMs are the lynchpins of a unit.

Their door must be open to soldiers who feel they have no one else to talk to.

Leaders at every level of the chain of command should make it their business to really know their people – not just their name and rank but their individual circumstances, their family situation and stressors.

We need to love and lead our personnel – and understand they are fighting a battle every single day.

This is going to be very important as we gradually return to something that resembles normality after months of turmoil.

Some people have been home for a year, some have hardly been home at all – everyone's experience will have been different.

On a related note, I'm still seeing examples of Covid shaming and horrendous accusations that colleagues are faking symptoms to get out of work.

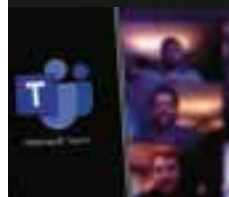
This has to stop immediately. Those who fall ill haven't committed a crime and troops in self-isolation are doing absolutely the right thing.

I've had to do it twice myself and I work for CGS.

Leave medical diagnoses to doctors.

“No one knows your mates better than you”

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL



Q Do you have any “Covid keepers” – things you will still do after the pandemic?

A More virtual meetings and less travel – I get more done, can spend more time with my family and it's good for the environment



Pictures: Shutterstock

Time to show social support

I ENGAGE with social media because I want to be open and transparent – even though it takes up a lot of my time.

If you have a genuine concern – not just a moan – you can DM me or contact me via Defence Connect and I'll do my best to help.

If you have a question for the Army, give the chain of command the opportunity to respond instead of throwing it out on Twitter, where it grows arms and legs.

That said, I don't have

an issue with the memes, or people criticising the organisation – what I do have a problem with is cyber bullying and personal attacks.

It's so disappointing to see people being hurt and we are now working on a social media abuse policy because it severely affects victims, both physically and mentally.

I hope that one day it will be seen as totally unacceptable, but until then it's really important our soldiers understand that we have an arm around them.

Thankful for Duke's loyal service

■ LIKE everyone I was sad to hear of the passing of the Duke of Edinburgh.

Not only has the country lost a role model and Second World War veteran, the royal family has lost a husband, father and grandfather.

Lots of my mates have been saying, “oh, I did this with him, he said that to me”, but while I was in the same room as him on occasions, I never got the chance to meet him.

So I have no good dits, and I doubt he knew who I was, but I definitely knew who he was – and as a rifleman I thank him for his service and everything he did for the regiment and the Army.



Picture: Peter Davies



'Conversation over conflict is key'

CALLS to the Army Mediation Service have surged during the early months of 2021.

More than 100 enquiries were received between January and March – up significantly on previous years.

Lt Col Trigger Buxton (RA), who as head of the unacceptable behaviours team oversees mediation, said the increase was likely due to word of mouth and a growing awareness of how successful the approach can be.

"We have a lot of repeat custom," he explained. "Once a unit sees the power of mediation at resolving differences, they come back to us again and again, earlier in the dispute resolution process rather than as a last resort."

"When a problem has got to the level of a Service complaint, people tend to have their trench dug, barbed wire out and their machine gun set – they are not willing to do anything."

"But the sooner you can have a conversation, the better the chances of rebuilding a working relationship."

Carried out by a 40-strong team of specially trained volunteers working in pairs, the process is impartial,

confidential and independent of the Service complaints system.

Both parties must agree to take part and no records are kept of discussions.

With Lt Col Buxton estimating a potential caseload of 400 enquiries this year, he believes the scheme is introducing lasting cultural change to Army workplaces.

"My team has doubled in size in the last 18 months," he added. "We run one course a year, with eight spaces for around 120 applicants."

"It's really popular and from my own experience I can say it has taught me unbelievable skills about how to deal with people and how to listen to them properly when they have problems."

"Most importantly, the change is being seen and felt among the Army's staff – by officers who need less time to deal with disputes, to people just knowing there are effective processes in place to deal with these issues."

To find out about mediation contact 0306 7707691 or army-mediation-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

● Be a good listener – page 25

IN NUMBERS

97

percentage of mediations that were successful, or partially so, in 2019

4

average number of weeks needed to complete the process from initial call to finish

“People tend to have their trench dug”



SSAFA SEEKS FAMILIES

■ MILITARY charity SSAFA is running free residential adventure breaks for military families with children who have additional needs and disabilities.

The holidays will be based at The Calvert Trust centres in the Lake District, from August 16 to 20, and Devon, from October 25 to 29.

Places will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis but priority will be given to families who have not attended before.

Each site is fully accessible for those with physical, learning, behavioural and sensory disabilities and visitors will challenge themselves in a variety of outdoor activities including horse riding, kayaking and abseiling.

Email anda@ssafa.org.uk – the deadline for applications is May 28.

MIGHTY MEDAL SUM

■ A PRIVATE collector paid £248,000 at auction for the Victoria Cross awarded to Pte James Towers of 2nd Battalion, The Cameronians during the First World War.

The then 21-year-old received the accolade after he showed utter disregard for his own safety when he volunteered to carry a vital message, under continuous heavy fire, to a stranded platoon at Mericourt in 1918.

He did so despite knowing that five of his comrades had already been killed while attempting the same mission.

The medal was expected to sell for between £140,000 and £180,000 when it went under the hammer at Dix Noonan Webb.



CATTERICK HEALTH CARE

■ PLANS for a state-of-the-art primary health care facility in Catterick have secured financial approval.

The Catterick Integrated Care Campus has been more than seven years in the making and will be a joint venture between the NHS and MoD – meaning it will deliver a range of services for the local population, regardless of whether they wear uniform.

GP services, military and community dentistry, occupational health and physiotherapy will be among the amenities delivered at the site, which hopes to welcome its first visitors in late 2023.

Picture: Graeme Main



TROOP HONOUR FOR INSPIRATIONAL ALHAJI

■ AN EX-PARA who joined the Army to avoid falling in with a bad crowd has said he is honoured to have a training troop named after him.

Retired lieutenant colonel Sulle Alhaji took pride of place on a parade at Pirbright, where he spoke to recruits in the outfit now bearing his monicker.

And after inspecting the soldiers – part of 2 Army Training Regiment's Caen Company – he admitted: "I feel as if I have woken up in a different dimension."

"It's so bizarre but also an incredible honour – hearing the troop commander shout 'Alhaji Troop, eyes right' was so strange – I can't believe it."

The former officer, who also served as a physical training instructor, has long been recognised for his inspiring personal story.

Growing up on a troubled council estate in the north-east, he joined the paras as a teenager in 1978 and progressed, despite the widespread racial discrimination of the era. He concluded his 41-year career by heading up the Army Youth Outreach Team, where the troops he led helped inspire others.



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Family visa headaches hit home



Picture: Shutterstock

A GROWING number of foreign and Commonwealth enquiries are being received by the Army Families Federation (AFF).

In 2020 they accounted for a quarter of all calls to the organisation, according to the Families' Concerns report. This was a significant increase on the previous year.

Queries came from Service families and the chain of command. Their problems included visa applications and immigration rules on minimum income requirements.

Families on overseas assignments face particular difficulty with visas because they cannot undertake the mandatory "life in the UK" test on location so must travel back at their own expense. The AFF said it had repeatedly raised the issue with the

MoD and Home Office but "lack of guidance" remained.

The document highlighted a "very challenging" year for families during the pandemic.

"Topics they contacted us about included the impact of the assignment freeze on the allocation of Service family accommodation, children about to move schools and partners about to start new jobs, as well as the particular challenges of moving to and from overseas assignments," it said.

Housing remained a big area of enquiry. But the report noted a "pleasing" reduction in calls about repairs and maintenance.

Chief Executive Collette Musgrave said: "Whether juggling home-schooling and managing in lockdown with their serving partner deployed overseas, having their move postponed due to the assignment freeze, or with their Service person away supporting the Army's Covid-19 effort, families have dealt with much change."

She said the evidence gathered would be used to press for change to help personnel and their loved ones.

Did you know ?



Foreign and Commonwealth personnel who wish to continue living in the UK after service must pay **£2,389 each** in visa fees. So a soldier with a partner and two children gets a bill for almost **£10,000**. Last year The Royal British Legion launched a campaign called Stop the Service Charge, demanding the Home Office cancels the fees



Picture: Peter Davies

Power of Hope

■ A MORNING run of five kilometres may sound like a pretty leisurely start to the day for some *Soldier* readers. But WO2 Peter Hope (RA) has committed to doing this every day of 2021 no matter what – a blister-inducing quest that will see him clock up 1,825km by Christmas.

"Although the distance isn't massive, it will certainly be a challenge to do it come rain or shine, illness or injury," said the facilities manager at Baker Barracks, Thorney Island.

To help him raise £1,000 for military charity SSAFA visit [justgiving.com/fundraising/peter-hope3756](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/peter-hope3756)

MARATHON GOES LIVE

■ ARMED Forces children's charity Scotty's Little Soldiers has announced the return of its May Marathon fundraising challenge.

Held for the fifth successive year, the event asks participants to complete the marathon distance of 26.2 miles during the course of the month in any way they choose – be it walking, running, crawling or even hopping.

The initiative raised more than £20,000 last year – despite the pandemic. For more details on how to get involved visit [maymarathon.com](https://www.maymarathon.com)

IN NUMBERS 11,000+

total enquiries dealt with by the AFF last year

A WAR ON WASTED TIME



Picture: Peter Davies

A NEW maintenance system for the Army's Land Rover fleet has gone live in a bid to cut the time spent on non-essential tasks in the workshop.

Under the previous process, vehicles would be scheduled for routine jobs such as oil and filter changes at a set time – regardless of usage. Now, potential work will be determined by odometer readings, with key tasks flagged up when certain mileage points are reached. The new approach comes on the back of a successful two-year trial at 16 Air Assault Brigade, which saw a 60 per cent reduction in maintenance.

"It means we're no longer asking personnel to perform tasks they know are not required," project lead Maj Matt Keogh (REME) told *Soldier*. "It will give time back to our soldiers."

"Throughout the trial there has been no discernible spike in vehicle failures and the new way of working will also lead to reductions in support materiel such as oil, lubes, nuts and bolts."

Maj Keogh said the process could be rolled out into the Army's wider fleet. "That is the vision," he added. "Not only for wheeled vehicles, but armoured platforms as well."

Personnel maintaining Land Rovers can read more in document ENv 310 on the James rolling screen.

Running

Why you feel more up for phys when the weather warms up

► AS the days get longer and the sun shines brighter the thought of getting outside and training becomes much more appealing.

But the benefits of stepping out in the summer stretch way beyond the fact that it's just more pleasant. Here, Army masters cross-country team manager Capt Joe Foreshe (RAPTC) explains why...



Physiological focus

- When exercising in the heat blood plasma becomes thicker, causing the heart to work harder. This in turn leads to an increase in plasma volume and red blood cell mass, similar to the effect caused when altitude training
- The warm weather helps make the muscles more pliable and ready for exercise, therefore reducing the risk of injury when first setting off

Motivating factor

The sun is a natural motivator – it's much easier to get out of bed on a nice summer's morning, rather than the midwinter's rain and cold

Vitamin D

This is a key vitamin that is absorbed through the skin when exposed to sunlight. It has many health boosting properties, with studies citing an increase in mood, stamina, reaction time and speed



Routine rotation

The longer, warmer days allow athletes to train for longer, which creates greater scope for changing routines, refocusing goals and setting new challenges

HOT

But be warned...



● **Training should be conducted with caution**, especially in the early part of the summer when relatively low temperatures can cause heat-related injuries as the body is still acclimatised to the winter. Athletes should also be wary of the power of the sun, with an increased risk of sunburn

● Top tips for training in the summer:

Avoid the hottest parts of the day and **always check the weather forecast** before starting out. Try to stick within the **JSP 375** guidelines

Use suncream to avoid getting burnt. Remember, sweat can cause the cream to disperse so apply a special sports product

Keep hydrated

Listen to your body – if you start overheating stop and find shade



Preparing for re-entry

Managing stress and anxiety around returning to the workplace

▶ WHEREVER you stand on it, working from home has become the norm for many over the last year.

But with lockdown finally easing, the Army is eyeing a gradual resumption of routine business, possibly from next month.

Whether you are relishing or dreading the prospect, there are some steps personnel up and down the chain of command can take to make sure the process goes smoothly.

What leaders should do

Soldier grilled Col Tim Boughton, colonel mental health engagement at the Army Health Branch, on how those in charge should approach the return to work

Communicate clearly

People need time to be able to plan and get used to the idea of when and how they will go back to work. Make sure you are consistent in your messaging and that your team know you are thinking of their welfare.

Be mindful of different tensions

Some personnel have been at work throughout and have made a safe environment that they feel happy in. All of a sudden you will have an influx of people coming in from outside. Meanwhile others have stayed in their bubbles at home for a long time. Some might be a bit gung-ho in their approach to Covid safety measures and others are more rigid. All of these areas can lead to friction.

Be open to new ways of working

People will have relied more on technology than face-to-face meetings. Coming back together again will take some getting used to.

Ensure staff feel safe

Physically, everyone must feel confident of the force protection measures in place to prevent them catching Covid but, mentally, there is still much uncertainty. They will be wondering if this is permanent or what will happen if infection rates start to rise again. Good leaders will get everyone in and say, 'I don't know exactly how this is going to go, but let's approach it together'.

Show compassion and empathy

Some people will be scared. Others can't wait to get back. Those with families may have additional stressors at home or ongoing childcare issues. Everyone needs to adjust, and leaders should manage their own expectations and offer some leeway. Even senior officers will be feeling anxious. Have open conversations with your peers and chain of command and be honest if you are nervous. Do things that make you calm, whether that's mindfulness or going for a run.

Take it step by step

Give it time, accept there is no 'normal' and let everyone find their feet

Look out for your team

It can be hard to spot signs of stress in your colleagues but when you work closely with someone, you generally know when they are not themselves

Any change in their usual behaviour and performance is a red flag, for example...

- An outgoing person becoming withdrawn, or the opposite

- Uncharacteristic mistakes or procrastinating

- Missing parades or being late when normally punctual

- Negative statements such as "everything is against me"

- A loss of personal discipline

- Seeming more tired than usual or mentioning sleep problems

- Showing signs they might be drinking more than usual

- Being short tempered or having outbursts of anger

- Appearing distracted or "not quite there"

- Low energy or mood

ASK TWICE – If you think someone is acting out of character ask "how are you feeling?" and wait to hear the answer. If they respond with "I'm fine", ask "are you sure?"

● THREE mindful moments to conquer anxiety

Mindfulness is about bringing yourself back to the present moment. If you find thoughts are overwhelming you, try the following exercises – as recommended by the Occupational Therapy Team at Stanford Hall Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre

1 Have a brew – but don't just gulp it down. Spend a few moments feeling the warmth of the cup in your hands, smell the aromas, with your eyes open or closed. Sip it slowly and really taste it



2 Take a mindful shower – rather than thinking of your to-do list or things that have stressed you out, notice the feel of the water against your skin, the way the steam moves in the cubicle or perhaps follow the water droplets as they slide down the wall



3 Spend time outside – go to a park, forest, beach or just your back garden for a little while and soak it in. Sit and acknowledge the sights around you, the sounds of the wind in the trees, the sea against the shore, the smells of the flowers and the feel of the sun on your skin



“Now is the time to act”

This warrant officer struggled with his mental health for nearly 20 years. He wants others to get help sooner

► WHEN the commanding officer of 66 Works Group, Royal Engineers asked for a volunteer to be the unit's mental health champion during lockdown, WO1 Neil Martin (RE) put his hand up. Having battled depression for most of his career, he thought telling his story might encourage others not to suffer in silence like he had...



If I'm honest, I took the wrong path from early on. During my first posting to Osnabruck, I thought the way to fit in was to drink and be the

centre of attention.

I'd binge all weekend and go without sleep, paying for it all with my flexible friend.

Over time I got into serious debt. I spiralled into a dark place of self-hatred and resentment, all of which were the initial stages of depression, although I wouldn't realise it for years.

Operational tours only exacerbated my problems. Mood swings and outbursts of rage became frequent occurrences.

When drunk I would act like an idiot and get into fights. I couldn't sleep without a drink and was frequently late for work.

These issues lurked even after I'd managed to pay off my debts and start a family.

After Op Herrick in 2014 I lost all interest in anything.

I just sat there staring at the walls and frequently exploded in anger whenever my children tried to get my attention.

At my lowest point I smashed up furniture and my wife found me holding a carving knife to my wrist. She rightly gave me an ultimatum to get myself sorted.

Even as I sat in the waiting room I still didn't think I needed to speak to a doctor, but as soon as I did, I felt like the weight of the world had been lifted.

Thanks to treatment by the Departments of Community Mental Health things started to look up for a couple of years.

Unfortunately, in 2016 an abscess on my face led to sepsis and I ended up on life support. I had to be resuscitated and my family were told to expect the worst.

By some miracle I pulled through, however, the trauma took its toll.

I couldn't sleep again, had flashbacks to hospital and the temper returned.

My seven-year-old son was scared to go near me and at one point he even witnessed me holding my wife against the wall by her throat.

That was a flash to bang moment. I went straight back to the medical centre and was eventually diagnosed with clinical depression and PTSD, which still now I control with medication and cognitive behavioural therapy.

I'm not ashamed about it. People fear appearing weak or that speaking out will end their careers, but I want to tell them – that's just not true.

If a crusty old warrant officer can be honest about his mental illness then so can anyone.

Did it affect my career? No. Do people think I'm weak? No. If anything, my friends, colleagues and chain of command were supportive.

Now I'm a mental health first aider and have done some of the OpSmart courses, and because of my experiences I think I'm good at spotting subtle signs that others are struggling.

That's something we should all look out for and it shouldn't be rank-dependent.

Even a sapper should feel able to say something if they notice one of their superiors acting differently.

I think the pandemic, especially, has been a catalyst for reflecting on our own

state of mind, so if anyone recognises themselves in my story, I'd urge them to please get help and speak to someone. I'm only still here to talk about it because I did.

My only regret is not recognising the problems any sooner.



Lending an ear

Army mediator, Lt Col Trigger Buxton (RA), on how to support someone using reflective listening



► IN THE military we move fast and shoot straight, but when a friend or colleague reaches out we sometimes lack the softer, interpersonal skills required to help them.

Often they are not looking for a solution – they just want someone to truly hear what they are saying.

Providing this kind of support isn't as easy as it sounds, however, so defence has partnered with workplace conflict management company CMP Resolutions to improve what is known as reflective listening among personnel.

I recommend their four-hour courses to any junior leader, but there are some tricks of the trade we can all benefit from...



Remember, it's not about you

- Give the other person at least 90 seconds to talk before responding
- **Allow five seconds of silence after they have finished speaking – there might be more that they need to say**
- Always ask yourself "why am I talking?" – the focus should be on them, not you
- **Do not interrupt them if they are in a flow, let them continue**

For more information about reflective listening courses contact info@cmpsolutions.com

Get help

To talk to someone about your mental health make an appointment at your medical centre or speak to a padre, welfare officer or mental health first aider in your unit.

Additional resources can be found in the **My Healthcare Hub** via **Defence Gateway** at army.mod.uk/people/join-well/managing-stress or at mentalhealth.org.uk

Dental BLEACHING

How the quest for the perfect smile can be harmful

► A GLEAMING set of unnaturally white gnashers has become standard for the influencers of Instagram and TikTok, but there are some things to be aware of if you're striving for the same look.

Dental officer Maj Christoph Harper (RADC) gives *Soldier* the lowdown...

What is dental bleaching?

Professional treatments can whiten teeth, with a low risk of damage to the tooth structure. The process uses chemical agents to break down stains within the superficial layers of the tooth and is less destructive than cosmetic alternatives such as veneers and crowns, which require drilling of the teeth.

How does it work?

Commonly, a dentist will construct custom-made bleaching trays and prescribe tooth whitening agents, alongside specific instructions for use – the patient initially wears the tray for a two-hour period daily, repeating the process over the course of a week, or more, until the desired whitening effect has been achieved.

How good will the results be?

It varies. Dental bleaching will not whiten existing fillings, veneers or crowns, so shade differences can occur between these and your actual teeth. Results are also not permanent, and teeth will become duller again over time.

What are the risks?

It's generally safe when done professionally but side effects may include tooth sensitivity, gum irritation, and in rare cases the bleaching gel could cause an allergic reaction. You should also avoid it if you are pregnant.

Does the military offer dental bleaching?

It depends. In line with NHS guidance, Defence Primary Healthcare (DPHC) will treat patients whose tooth discolouration has been caused by trauma, infection or developmental defects. It will not normally be done when there is no clinical need or when the staining has been caused by poor levels of oral hygiene or smoking.

So, can I go to a private dentist?

Yes, you can consider paying privately for bleaching treatment, but you must complete the whole of the treatment plan with your private dentist. DPHC will not complete parts of an unfinished cosmetic procedure or rectify any complications.

What about buying products online or from beauty salons?

Don't risk it. Such products may contain illegal, unlicensed substances like acids or higher concentration bleaching agents, which greatly increase the risk of irreversible damage to your teeth and mouth. Dental bleaching is regulated by UK law and it is illegal for dentists to use bleaching agents containing stronger than six per cent hydrogen peroxide. It is also against the law for anyone other than a dentist to prescribe tooth whitening treatments.



THE FACTS

Keep staining at bay...



Brush twice daily and floss – this will also reduce the risk of tooth decay and gum disease



Avoid foods containing turmeric and soy as well as drinks such as black tea, fruit teas and coffee



Quit smoking because it significantly discolours the teeth – and raises your risk of oral cancer and other diseases



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ARMY TLB CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

PEOPLE PLAN 2021/2022

The Army's Civilian Workforce People Plan for 21/22 has been developed to offer a matured programme of work to support the results of the Civil Service People Survey. It builds on the People Plan of 20/21, taking lessons from the unique set of challenges we have faced while in a global pandemic. It sets out four key strategic priorities and eight strategic goals.

OUR VISION

With leadership at the heart of everything we do, our people are engaged and work in an inclusive, healthy environment where everyone's potential can be met; with the right skills, used to the best effect, our people are recognised for the value they bring to the Army.

THE FOUR KEY STRATEGIC GOALS ACT AS PILLARS IN THE TLBS AIM TO ENSURE:



Our people are engaged and committed to deliver the Army's outputs



Our people deliver the Army's requirements by having the right mix of skills, expertise and values



Our people are recognised for the value they bring and are empowered to meet their potential



Our people work in a supportive, healthy and inclusive environment

CONTACT US

For more information, news and updates impacting the Civilian Workforce, read the Civilian Insight Newsletter or visit Civilian Insight on Defence Connect.

For specific information, please contact the Army Civilian Workforce team on:
Army Res-CWT-Group (MULTIUSER) ArmyRes-CWT-Group@mod.gov.uk

ARMY PEOPLE SURVEY 2020

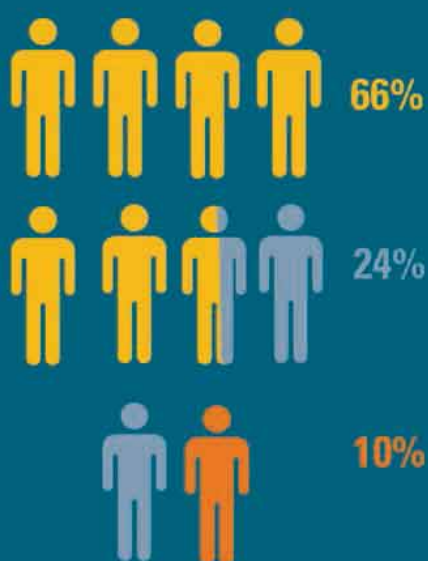
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INDEX

We run the People Survey every year to give our civilians, and military colleagues who work the most closely with them, the chance to say how it feels to be part of the Army. As this is a large survey and is completed across Government it gives us a really good idea of what it's like working here compared both to previous years and to other organisations. Some of the key results are shown below. To find out more, search 'People Survey' on MoDNet or Defence Connect'.

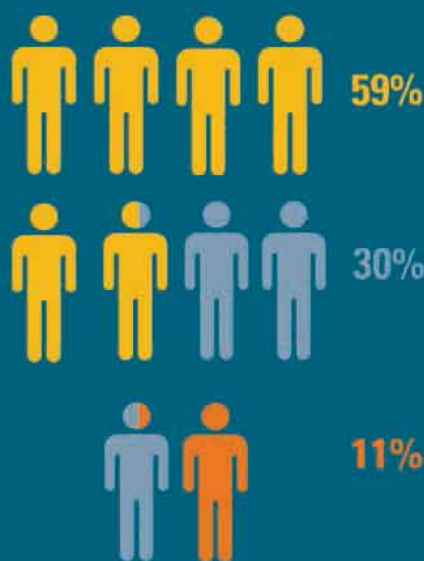
From across the Army there were over 7,800 civil service and military participants in the annual People Survey 2020, the highest level of response seen by the organisation in the 10 years the Survey has been running. This also saw a strong Engagement Index score at 68%, a 4% point increase on last year's score.



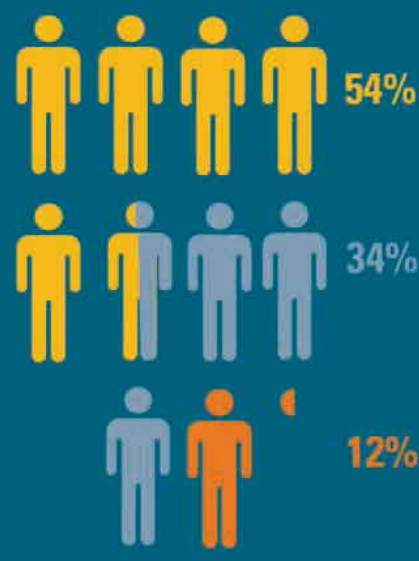
I WOULD RECOMMEND MY ORGANISATION AS A GREAT PLACE TO WORK




MY ORGANISATION INSPIRES ME TO DO THE BEST IN MY JOB



MY ORGANISATION MOTIVATES ME TO HELP IT ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES



■ = FAVOURABLE ■ = NEUTRAL ■ = NON FAVOURABLE



Report: **Cliff Caswell** Pictures: **Graeme Main**

BATTLEFRONT *BASICS*

The next generation of
commanders is preparing to
lead a new type of war



“
It’s about getting
them to focus in
the face of sensory
overload
”

THE outlines of troops are emerging one-by-one from tunnels. In the semi-darkness of this mock village their shapes appear to glide through the gloom.

Eyes managing to focus on the soldiers will fill out the bulky silhouettes into menacing three-dimensional figures.

With faces masked behind respirators and night-vision goggles, personnel on this training area close to Brecon’s Infantry Battle School could resemble characters from a PlayStation game. But as they begin their clearance drills, letting loose with an array of personal firepower, the scene is a far cry from *Call of Duty*.

Rounds of Simunition – paintball-like projectiles – fly through the darkness and contact with opposing troops as the infanteers systematically move from room to room.

But as they head for the basement they are greeted by a surreal

nightclub-type experience – a sound system blasting out hip hop music in tandem with a 1990s rave-style light show.

“This is the playlist that keeps me going at the gym,” one of the instructors on this section commanders’ battle course quips as soldiers are hammered with the dance beat and psychedelic effect combo. “But here the experience is about getting students to focus in the face of a sensory overload.”

It is a serious point. Ensuring junior leaders are open to the unexpected is critical – particularly in a world where the nature of warfare is changing.

Amid evolving threats, sharp-end troops now face the prospect of conflicts characterised by a mix of new tech and full-on conventional fighting. Acknowledging this reality, senior officers and politicians are in the process of reorganising ground close combat structures to meet the challenge. »





8 WEEKS
OF TRAINING

120 TROOPS
ON THE LATEST
COURSE



“
The current course is
far more complex than it
was just a decade ago
”

The next few years will see investment in new equipment as well as a shake-up of the Infantry with a focus on promoting greater agility and more specialist roles. Against this backdrop – and with future adversaries likely to field forces with similar capabilities to the UK – training bosses have their work cut out.

“The current course is far more complex than the package I went through just a decade ago,” Brecon-based instructor CSjt Robert Hamilton (Rifles) points out, as students carry out their dawn assault across the mock village.

“With the professional enemy we are now likely to face, the section commander needs to have a solid grasp of a situation as well as all the assets available to them – they need to get everything together and make decisions quickly.”

An eight-week package, primarily for Infantry lance corporals seeking promotion, the battle course features both classroom- and field-based learning. Students can expect to be physically and mentally tested as they hone the skills needed in a critical leadership role.

Personnel from other areas of the Army, such as the armoured regiments, can also register for the training if bosses believe they will benefit from the experience.

Having boxed off the theory, they will be put to the test in serials including urban warfare and forest assaults on the Sennybridge Training Area.

They will also need to master the protocols to clear trench systems, while recent courses have included a classic jungle warfare tactic in the shape of a river crossing.

“It is hardcore to be honest, but the troops here are doing really well,” points out junior division instructor Capt Malachi Jones (Yorks) as dawn gives way to daylight.

“We’re now at the halfway point with this course and have four full platoons – although we have lost some to injury as well as other issues, we are still expecting to finish with around 90 per cent of our 120 students.”

The performance of these troops had been all the more noteworthy given the restrictions imposed amid the Covid pandemic, Capt Jones emphasises. »





"In particular, everyone has had to stay at Brecon during the training," he continues. "They have not been able to see loved ones, which has been hard."

Students stress that the course is a demanding undertaking on all fronts, but believe it is a necessary baptism of fire for those aspiring to front-line command.

"Although this is definitely shaping up to be a tough few weeks, it is an important next step for me," says LCpl Joseph Kerrigan (PWRR). "I've been in my current rank for three years and am hoping to promote to corporal soon."

"Physically, it is hard because you can be carrying quite a lot of kit around. In addition, there is a fair bit of info to assimilate."

LCpl Curtis Horbury (Rifles) shares the sentiment. "I've actually been enjoying the training – it has been good fun so far," he says. "The instructors in Brecon help you sort out any bad habits you might have picked up."

"Infantry work has definitely changed from the days of

Afghanistan and working around forward operating bases.

"We're really getting back to the basics of what is more conventional fighting."

LCpl Joe Ramsden (R Anglian) says his fellow NCOs have been a great support.

"It is a good course," he adds. "We're at the halfway point now and have been looking at tactics for clearing trenches as well as other disciplines. I'm with a good bunch of people – which is important – and learning a lot."

Teamwork is certainly critical. With the nature of the battlespace becoming more complex, those on the front lines must be able to maintain the upper hand in unforgiving environments and against well-matched foes.

Technology has its part to play, but the soldier is still the lynchpin of success. As the Army reorganises its assets for the digital age, the section commander will remain at the cutting edge of the action. »



CV

CSjt ROBERT HAMILTON

Age: 34

Cap badge: Rifles

Years of service:
2004-present

Operational experience:
Extensive, including Op Telic in Iraq and Op Herrick in Afghanistan





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“

It has been a challenge
so far but also good fun
with a lot of learning

”

READY TO ROCK

We asked troops on the course for their views on the training so far...

CPL BILLY BORTHWICK **RIFLES**

“I’ve been on the course having been a gunnery instructor for the past four years – it should open up some more opportunities to do different jobs in the future.

“It has been tough – especially the urban drills. The environment is complex and tunnels are demanding in body armour, respirators and night-vision goggles.”

LCPL IAN LUTAAYA **QRH**

“My unit, The Queen’s Royal Hussars, is an armoured regiment equipped with the Challenger 2.

“The course has obviously been demanding but it has given me a completely different perspective.

“The training has made me approach things in a different way as I’m normally on a wagon. It has been a challenge so far but also good fun with a lot of learning.”



FUTURE SOLDIERS

Earlier this year the government announced sweeping changes to the structure and capabilities of the Armed Forces. For the Infantry this will mean...



More emphasis on rapid deployment



New Ranger battalions



More balanced troop numbers across four divisions



Extra assets for 16 Air Assault Brigade



Smarter recruitment

Read the April issue for more details on the Army’s modernisation plan

BATTLEFIELD TOURS ENTER NEW ERA



Online lessons have replaced them during the pandemic, so could battlefield study trips be consigned to history? *Soldier* asked personnel and historians for their view...



LOVE them or loathe them, battlefield visits have long been an integral part of overseas training exercises and commemorative anniversaries.

But with most international travel still off the cards, military historians have been forced to change the way they do business with the British Army.

Tours that once involved multiple stop-offs and hefty hotel bills on a meandering three-day coach trip can now be

undertaken on-screen in a couple of hours.

And lessons that once meant having to maintain your concentration and hydration levels watching re-enactments in the baking heat of the Iberian Peninsula (pictured) can now be enjoyed in the cooler climes of Tidworth Garrison via a laptop.

Military historian Dan Hill set up Battle Guide Virtual Tours (battleguide.co.uk) last October after spotting a need for things to be done differently. »



The company now provides military audiences across the globe with colourful, expert-led tours that blend a variety of content – from drone footage, 360-degree imagery and light detection and ranging, which offer a very accurate picture of the ground, to real-life veteran testimonies and videos.

“We combine the very best aspects of traditional on-the-ground battlefield studies with the latest technology,” the founder explained to *Soldier*.

“Each tour is bespoke to the unit in question. And we can visit any location across the globe, from Waterloo to Goose Green, in a matter of moments.

“Individuals can join remotely from anywhere, and the studies can be completed in a single day – which is a massive help to units that are short on time.”

Over recent months the fledgling business has supplied several regiments. And with virtual lessons open to an almost-unlimited number of participants, the educational benefits as well as the time and cost-saving ones are not difficult to see.

“We’ve had amazing feedback so far,” Hill said.

“It’s a really fascinating way to share history and people have been pleasantly surprised at how interactive the sessions are.

“If someone has a question or comment, we can answer it there and then.”

But the enthusiasm comes with a note of caution.

“The idea of fully replacing battlefield visits is not something we would ever want to do,” Hill conceded. “The virtual studies are designed to complement the physical trips.

“We are military historians at heart, and believe personnel should have the chance to go to these important locations.”

However, in an organisation where workloads and red tape can render real visits impossible – and that’s before you consider the Covid factor – technology may have ridden to the rescue. And in some regards it could have the edge.

“We can transport people across the globe in a moment, comparing locations and linking pieces of history together in a way that we can’t on actual tours,” Hill said.

“We can go from the beaches of Gallipoli to the fields of the Somme in a matter of seconds.

“People have commented how they appreciate being able to connect different pieces of the puzzle this way.

“Orientation is difficult to put across on the ground.

“We can also visit places troops can’t. For example, the site of the Eastern Front battles at Stalingrad.”

One formation to have already benefited from this way of doing business is the First Fusiliers. Due to be on the Gallipoli Peninsula with around 25 of their NCOs as this issue went to press, the armoured infantrymen turned to Hill’s team for a Covid-compliant alternative.

“A good battlefield study really contributes to the fighting spirit of a regiment,” Maj Tony Bryant, officer commanding Zulu Company, explained. “We try to do one every year.

“If you can look at your regimental history and understand the decisions made on the ground, and follow that through to the outcomes, it really allows you to analyse tactics.”

Keen to ensure his junior leaders did not miss out, the officer instead enrolled 50 troops on a three-day online course with Battle Guide Virtual Tours.

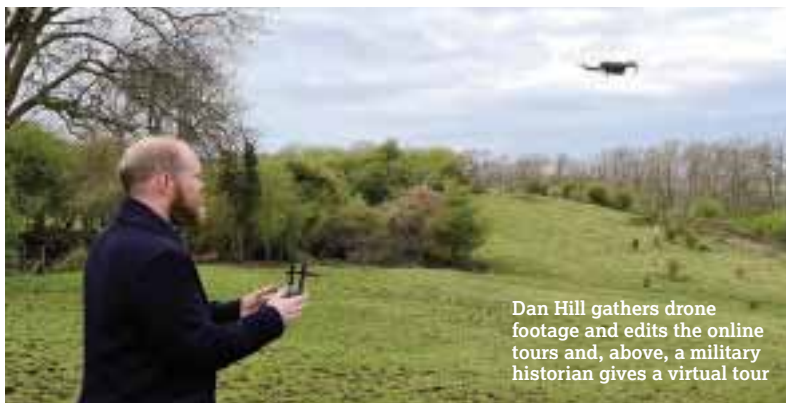
“It proved to be very good,” he said.

“It allowed us to examine a battlefield in a completely different way, and it was easy to organise.

“A fundamental difference was that blended approach – we looked at Gallipoli and the Somme and they overlaid pictures and video, and that really brought them to life for us.”

For Fus Josh Pitt, the experience was an interesting contrast to the Battle of Narva study he undertook last year on Op Cabrit.

“It was a lot different,” he said.



Dan Hill gathers drone footage and edits the online tours and, above, a military historian gives a virtual tour

"When you are walking the ground you definitely get more of a sense of what it would be like, and the scale, by actually seeing the terrain. And everyone likes a day out on the bus.

"But online you get a better idea of the larger battle.

"It was still an enjoyable experience – even if we did miss out on a trip to Turkey."

LCpl Tate Sessions was impressed by the mapping possibilities in particular.

"I learnt a lot over a couple of days," he admitted. "We don't do a lot of that stuff in the Army.

"In the circumstances, the virtual option was good."

Such feedback is impressive but, as anyone who has done a real battlefield tour knows, the evening socialising is a non-negotiable element – a point not lost on Hill.

"The only thing that's missing from the virtual studies is the bar, which is possibly quite important," he admitted.

Maj Bryant agrees that not all the magic of these trips can be recreated online.

"There is something really special about going to a location and putting yourself on the ground," he said. "You can smell the air and you get the full picture.

"The 360-degree imagery is great, but when you are on the shore looking down, and you can see where the shrapnel hit, and put yourself in the shoes of the people who were there... I don't think you can replace that."

Mike Peters (ex-AAC), chairman of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides, could not agree more.

He believes there are real advantages to virtual learning but, like Hill, does not think they should fully replace travel.

"The number of times I've stood on some ground that people have read about, studied in the classroom, and seen depicted in a movie... to then hear the phrase 'ah, now I get it'," he recalled.

"There is no substitute for walking, seeing, touching and

THE VERDICT

Fusiliers weigh up battlefield tours...



JOSH PITT

Rank: Fusilier

Age: 23

Service started: 2019

Real, virtual or both?

"I can see the benefits of blending them – you could get the best of both worlds then"

ALEXANDER KWILECKI

Rank: Fusilier

Age: 24

Service started: 2020

Real, virtual or both?

"Both – because virtual does offer aspects you wouldn't get in person"



TATE SESSIONS

Rank: Lance corporal

Age: 20

Service started: 2017

Real, virtual or both?

"Real – I would always rather do it this way. I just like being there"

feeling the wind on your face.

"Humans are sensory creatures."

Add to this the fact that troops studying in barracks can easily be dragged off for "more important" tasks, and the issue becomes cloudier still.

Peters believes much will depend on the speed with which the global travel industry picks up again post-Covid.

"I think it will be some time before we return to pre-pandemic levels of battlefield study visits," he concluded.

Whatever the long-term future for online lessons, one thing is clear – their emergence offers greater flexibility to regiments keen to learn from their forebears. For this reason, their arrival onto the military history scene must surely be celebrated. ■

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A CENTURY OF BACKUP

The Royal British Legion turns 100 this month. *Soldier* finds out about its tireless mission to ensure troops always have somewhere to turn...



A CENTURY may have passed since the nation's biggest Armed Forces charity rose from the ashes of the First World War, but its calling has never altered.

Providing support in just about every area of a soldier or veteran's life, The Royal British Legion's identity as the military community's greatest advocate is recognised by all.

Its annual Poppy Appeal – perhaps the best-known aspect of this work and certainly the biggest fundraiser – has become synonymous with a deep national respect for the Services.

Since the very first one back in 1921, millions upon millions of man-made red flowers – inspired by the famous poem *In Flanders Fields* – have raised money towards improving life for those who serve Queen and country.

However, a quick chat with any of the Legion's staff – many of them former soldiers themselves – about their own motivations for this crucial work, and a far more low-key side to the charity is revealed.

Explaining someone's pension entitlement, offering help to »

Report: Sarah Goldthorpe Pictures: © The Royal British Legion, Graeme Main

a gambling addict, assisting a family with benefits paperwork – it is arguably these sorts of endeavours that have the biggest impact when it comes to turning around the lives of Servicemen and women.

According to ex-Household Cavalryman Alex Owen, the charity's head of engagement, it is these tales from its vast network of 2,500 community branches that best illustrate the Legion's contribution.

"This is an organisation that is institutionally quite humble," he tells *Soldier*.

"But often it's the stuff that's not quite as headline-grabbing which can have the most effect.

"You only have to have done a day's service in the military to be eligible for assistance from us.

"It could be anything from helping a veteran navigate the bureaucracy of getting a new mobility scooter to day-to-day problems with money.

"There are thousands and thousands of interventions like this on a daily basis by the RBL. We are very much here to support with stuff like that.

"And these seemingly little things add up to the great reason the Legion is important to the fabric of British society."

Any Service personnel looking for assistance may be reassured by the confidential nature of its support.

Owen continues: "If there are things people are less confident about going to the chain of command with, they can come to us.

"All of our services that are offered to the veteran community are offered to the serving community, too. We try to get into phase one establishments to let people know we are here."

The former major pays tribute to the charity's multitude of specialists and caseworker volunteers.

"These teams are experts in finding out what the issues are and solving them," he adds. "They even get problems solved you didn't know you had in the first place!"

It may have been campaigning for better treatment of military personnel for 100 years now, but there is no let-up in the volume of work faced by the RBL.

Its taskings are split into several areas – financial and employment support, care and independent living, expert guidance and physical and mental wellbeing.

Facilities it has funded to boost the health of soldiers and veterans include the Battle Back Centre at Lilleshall, the complex





Clockwise from top left: Amputee Andy Barlow (ex-RRF) inside the complex trauma gym at DMRC Stanford Hall; A Legion pop-in centre; Lawrence Philips (ex-RDG); RBL fundraising event Pedal to Paris, 2019; Wounded Servicemen at Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton – a military treatment centre created by the Legion – in 1918; Selling poppies at Waterloo Station to raise funds

trauma gym at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (shown above left) and the Centre for Blast Injury Studies at Imperial College London.

Running alongside these large, expensive projects are volunteers getting people to their appointments, issuing grants for adaptive equipment and – vitally – a sympathetic ear.

Lawrence Philips (ex-RDG, above) is under no illusion as to the impact of this work to tackle “the little things” in soldiers’ lives.

He says his life was saved by the Legion’s willingness to intervene on several fronts.

“Without their help I would be dead now, 100 per cent,” he explains. “I was depressed and suicidal.”

Philips contacted the charity after running into trouble with a payday loan that spiralled into debt.

Local case officer Paul James stepped in to get him mental health support, and the charity’s benefits, debt and money advice team arranged a three-way call with his creditors, taking control of the situation and negotiating him smaller repayments.

“I will be forever grateful to Paul and everyone at the Legion in Yorkshire,” he adds.


“I don’t really want to think about where I would be now without them.

“They helped me sort out both my mental health and my financial health.”

The veteran has since embarked on a new teaching career.

The degree of experience the Legion brings to this kind of work stems from its considerable experience fighting for the health of troops.

In 1944, with two world wars fresh in everyone’s minds »






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Above: Ex-Servicemen demonstrating over the thousands of veterans who lost their jobs after the First World War

DID YOU KNOW?

The Royal British Legion...

- was formed on **May 15, 1921** from four organisations of ex-soldiers
- has around **2,500 membership branches** across the UK and overseas – the same number as in 1921
- held its **first Poppy Appeal in 1921**. Red silk poppies, inspired by the famous First World War poem *In Flanders Fields*, sold out instantly and raised more than £106,000. The following year, the Poppy Factory was set up, employing disabled ex-Servicemen to create the poppies to sell during the appeal. Today, the factory still produces millions of poppies each year
- was founded by **Fd Marshal Earl Haig** (pictured below), who was the architect of Remembrance Day, the adoption of the poppy and the two-minute silence



- **last year supported 2,500 families** through financial difficulties with its benefits, debt and money advice service

and huge numbers of men suffering life-changing injuries, the Legion was influential in establishing the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act.

This was the first time in British history the government moved to support disabled people into work; a change that set the foundations for further improvement for millions over successive generations

The organisation even had a role in founding today's NHS.

With conditions such as tuberculosis, rheumatism and arthritis endemic among veterans of the Great War, the Legion created a number of specialist treatment facilities.

These institutions later became the building blocks of the health service when it was established in 1948.

According to Lt Col Langley Sharp (Para, pictured below), head of the Centre for Army Leadership, such longstanding and consistent support is even a boost to operations.

"The Army and its senior leaders recognise the impact charities like the RBL have," he explains. "That's why there is so much support in the military for them and such big attendance at their events.

"They are a very important part of the wider fabric of the Army, and their support for soldiers absolutely fits into the moral component of being able to deliver operational effectiveness.

"Knowing charities like the RBL look after our interests when serving, and knowing they will be there when we retire, is vital – particularly when you go away on operations.

"It's about knowing you have that support base and foundation back home secure."

Such appreciation stretches across the ranks, as well.

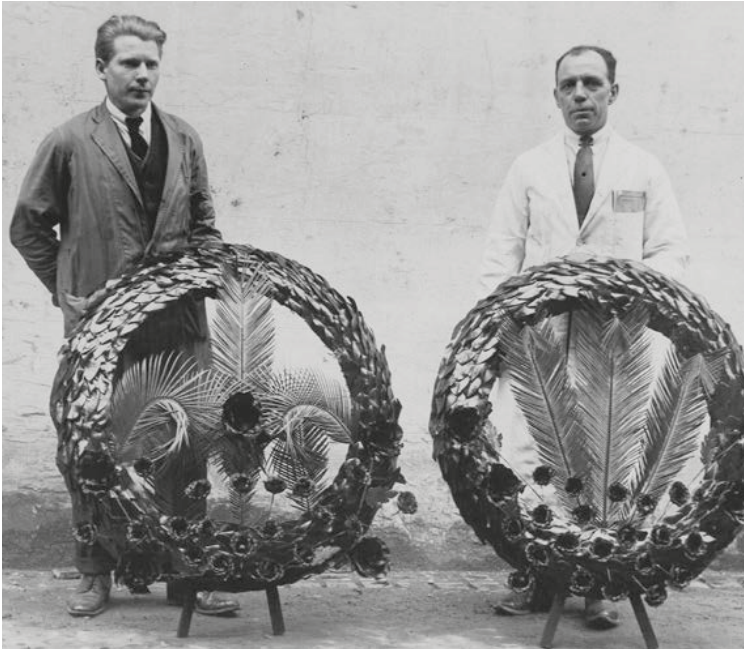
"I have seen the requirement for the RBL at first hand when personnel have been injured or worse in the line of duty and needed support for themselves or their families," Maj Pete Batley (RE), Army Rugby League community secretary, comments.

"I have personal experience of their staff and am constantly buoyed by their enthusiasm and outright belief in the cause."

Sjt Joseph Nwagu (Rifles) agrees. He says he will always be grateful for the precious family time the charity gave him during a busy work stint in Northern Ireland.

The RBL funded an all-inclusive activity break for him, his wife and three sons at Bennet House in Portrush. »





“At the time I was constantly on the move from one job to another, with no time to plan holidays,” he tells *Soldier*. “And being an immigrant family, we had no UK-based relatives to spend a few days with.”

“The RBL understood that, and the trip was something I was really thankful for. It was my eight-year-old’s first holiday, and that meant a lot.”

From the Army’s sports pitches to its tank parks and overseas bases, deep appreciation for this inspiring charity is not ever hard to find.

According to Owen, its quiet, tireless work behind the scenes is one of The Royal British Legion’s trademarks.

“We are not very good at blowing our own trumpet,” he admits. “We do these things because they are the right thing to do.”

“Similarly, we have found the most effective way of getting change to happen is campaigning behind closed doors.”

“But this anniversary is our chance to tell people a little more about it. The Legion was founded on the premise that those who give so much to our country should not come back to so little, and they have been true to that since 1921.”

“We will not stop fighting until there is no injustice or inequality in how the military are treated.”

“The way we treat our veterans is, I think, a good litmus to see whether somewhere is a good place to live.”

“To live in a country where you look after your Armed Forces is a country worth living in.”

Global conflicts, financial crises and pandemics may have come and gone, but thanks to the dedicated and quiet work of its volunteers and staff, the Legion’s backup has remained a reassuring constant. ■



Left: Veterans have been making wreaths at the Legion’s poppy factory since the 1920s

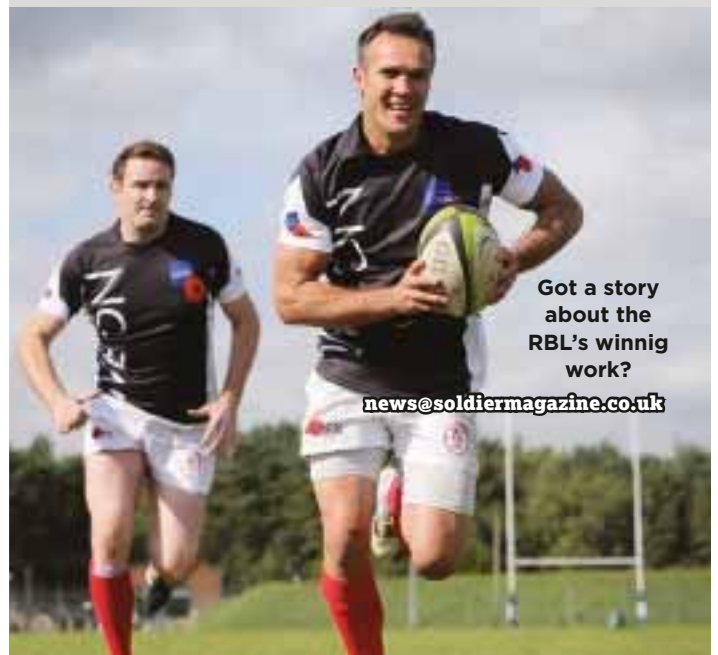
Below: Rugby Union is one of several Army sports to be supported by the RBL, reflecting its role in troops’ wellbeing and recovery

The Royal British Legion in 80 words

“After the First World War, millions of men came back with life-changing injuries. There was no welfare state, NHS or Disability Act to encourage employers to hire these men.

So we had this period of huge unemployment depression. On May 15, 1921 several different organisations came together for the common good. And from that moment onwards the RBL has been fighting, lobbying and providing services to help the veteran community. Today, we cater for the entire Armed Forces population.”

Alex Owen, Head of Armed Forces Engagement, The Royal British Legion



Got a story about the RBL’s winning work?

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Vehicle shown may not reflect latest UK specifications.

Figures shown are for comparability purposes only; they only compare fuel consumption and CO₂ figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load.

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A soldier wearing Osprey in Afghanistan in 2015

Picture: Sgt Wes Calder, RLC

‘Virtus still absent from my unit’

I THINK we have a serious issue with the inconsistent supply of Virtus body armour across the Service.

What if someone gets injured as a result of not having the latest equipment? My wife joked about it the other day, saying: “I’ll be suing the Army for millions if you get hurt on your next trip”.

However, there is a horrible truth within her humour.

Didn’t we learn from our experiences in Iraq? If you send people away without up-to-date protection there can be hell to pay.

Most personnel believe the roll-out of Virtus is complete, and those in large regiments all seem to have it. But there are still some troops like me – part of small teams who do short attachments – who have fallen through the cracks.

I am part of a unit that does not seem to care because the officers don’t deploy.

So here I am, packing right now to deploy yet again, without having the latest body armour.

Surely providing your soldiers with the latest protective kit should be page one, paragraph one for any Army. – **Name and address supplied**

Lt Col Gareth Davies, Soldier Systems Programme, Army Headquarters, replies: While Virtus is being fielded across the whole force (and extends to the Royal Air Force Regiment and Royal Marines), a staggered fielding

plan is required and the priorities are set by the Field Army.

This is so units receive the amount of equipment they need to ensure they can fully convert to Virtus (including spares) and personnel can be trained correctly.

This fielding is due to be completed by 2023.

The key lesson learnt so far, and which the Army is still struggling to get right, is that correct training must be provided for users.

And controlled issue helps to facilitate this.

Individual reinforcements not passing through the Mission Training and Mobilisation Centre (which delivers Virtus) may not be able to receive the correct training and so are required to deploy with Osprey body armour instead.

Those individuals can approach a Virtus-equipped unit for training and issue of the kit if they are deploying with that team.

Osprey, which is being phased out as Virtus is introduced, is still operationally effective, providing the same level of protection as its successor (in both soft armour and hard armour).

Further details and the opportunity to provide feedback can be found on the Virtus page on Defence Connect.

“
Didn’t we
learn from
Iraq?”

Talkback

YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers’ agendas... but please be brief. Emails must include your name and location (although we won’t publish them if you ask us not to). We reserve the right to accept or reject letters, and to edit for length, clarity or style.

Before you write to us with a problem, you should first have tried to get an answer via your own chain of command.

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk
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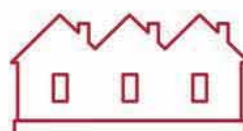
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GONG DING DONG

● I WAS pleased to see a response from Col Jim Taylor in December's issue to my letter about medal policy.

However, I was disappointed that he used typical Army rhetoric about how thorough the process is.

He failed to address my specific point about serving in Nigeria compared with Op Shader.

Medals for the latter are awarded to those based in the US, Cyprus, Greece and United Arab Emirates, while those for Nigeria are only given for serving in the joint operating areas (JOA), despite the hostile and austere surroundings experienced elsewhere in the country by the specialised infantry and BMATT.

— Name and address supplied

Col Jim Taylor, Assistant Head, Personal Services, Army Headquarters, replies: Medallion recognition for operations is considered against an assessment of the risks related to the mission and the rigours experienced by the personnel involved.

It also takes into account the geographical regions in which individuals should qualify.

This process may result in eligibility across a complete JOA or specific country, or it may be more restrictive.

Recognition for Op Shader comes in two forms. The Operational Service Medal (OSM) with clasp acknowledges the increased risk and rigour within the geographical boundaries of Iraq and Syria. The OSM without clasp takes into account the direct and indirect contribution to Op Shader by units and personnel outside those countries, but within the wider JOA.

Service in Nigeria under Op Turus was reviewed in 2020 and recognition granted through the General Service Medal 2008 with specific criteria.

Two Defence Instructions and Notices were published setting out the eligibility for personnel deployed there in specified units or within certain geographical regions, and recipients get that award with a West Africa clasp.

The criteria is being kept under review by the operations recognition board in Permanent Joint Headquarters, however.

“I feel utterly let down”



Picture: Graeme Main

‘Medal bar due to unjust policy’

SINCE my letter about the 2016 change to the eligibility criteria for the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal appeared in the June 2018 edition of *Soldier*, I have made a Service complaint to try and remedy my concern with the regulation.

While my complaint was not upheld, the panel did recommend that the medal's qualifying criteria be reviewed, noting how the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy handle low level offences differently compared with the Army.

Before the rule change five years ago, a disciplinary measure of more than seven days' pay or restriction of privileges could preclude you from receiving the medal, but a well-written letter of mitigation to your commanding officer could reverse this.

This appeal process was removed, except for individuals who were privates at the time of the offence. For the rest of us, a continuous 15-year clean record is required, regardless of how severe any charges were prior to that period.

So those of us with rank who received small charges between nine and 15 years' service are permanently barred from receiving this medal in a normal 24-year career. This was not a tri-Service change but applied only to the Army.

The review recommended during my Service complaint has not taken place, and after 11 months of trying to energise this I feel utterly let down.

I understand that a recommendation is just a recommendation, but why is there a two-tier system for this medal, where RAF and Navy personnel are still able to appeal if they have low level offences on their record but we are not?

It's led to a situation where soldiers

are expected to have “long service and perfect conduct”. — Name and address supplied

Col Jim Taylor, Assistant Head, Personal Services, Army Headquarters, replies: Thank you for your question about this prestigious decoration, which recognises those who have given long service with good conduct in all respects.

There is a need for strict eligibility and qualifying criteria that maintains the prestige of the medal. As per the tri-Service policy, certain entries on an individual's discipline record will result in a delay of the award.

This reflects the fact that the person concerned has not displayed good conduct in all respects.

As you state, an offence that is defined as minor in single Service policy may not incur a delay.

However, the single Services retain the authority to define what is “minor” and in Army policy it's only classified as such if the individual was a private at the time and received certain sanctions as defined in [annex Q of AGAI 67](#).

While this may differ across the three Services, the Army's definition reflects the position that officers, warrant officers and non-commissioned officers are always expected to give service that is above reproach.

Army policies are reviewed annually as a matter of course and I will pass on your concerns to my discipline and medallion recognition policy leads for their assessment as part of this process.

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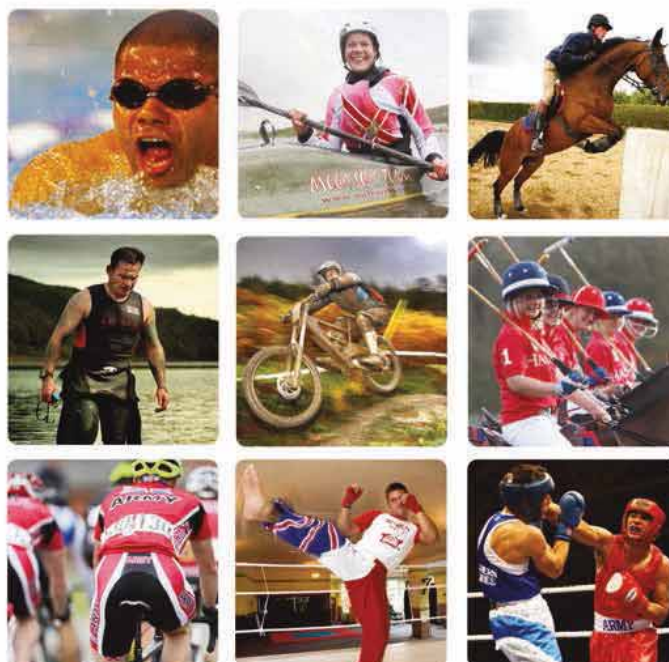


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WILL ADVICE SAVE DANISH BACON?

● I READ your magazine every month and really look forward to it because I get lots of information about what is happening with the British Army.

As a reservist working in the recruitment area for the Danish Army at the moment, I'd really like to know what your Reserve policy is on body mass index limits for new recruits. Can someone enlighten me please?

– **Capt Henrik Schroll, Ribe, Denmark**

Lt Col Mark Weir, Occupational Medicine, Army Headquarters, replies: Many thanks for your enquiry and your interest in the British Army.

Over here, body mass index (BMI) has been a frequent cause of failure at medical examinations.

We have recently reviewed its standards, which are the same for the Regular Army and the Reserve, and taken a more lenient view.

The BMI measure has been regularly challenged and a typical story is of an individual with proven athleticism (playing sport at a high level) who is rejected on the grounds of a high BMI alone.

Male applicants with a BMI of between 32.5 and 34.9 and females from 30.5 to 32.5 – and/or a waist circumference of 102cm to 108cm for males and between 88cm and 96cm for females – who have no other reason for deferral are now encouraged to attend soldier conditioning, rather than being deferred.

The programme runs nine times a year with up to 40 candidates per course.

Pilot studies demonstrated that more than 70 per cent of people successfully complete basic and trade training when referred to the course due to a high BMI alone (the programme also accepts individuals with requirements other than those who need a BMI reduction).

The option of attending a four-week conditioning course is not something we consider practical for a working Reservist, and at present they are directed to participate in their own personal regime to attain the required BMI.



Short shrift for shorts query

I AM currently deployed in Cyprus and the temperatures are rising, making working in issued shirts and trousers a rather sweaty affair.

Is there a reason why the Army does not issue MTP shorts to combat this?

If tailored from existing trouser design, they would look smart and be practical as they could retain the map pockets.

Some other nations acknowledge this by issuing shorts as standard. – **Name and address supplied**

WO2 Ian Radford, Directorate of Support, Army Headquarters, responds: MTP shorts are available (Defence Clothing Catalogue number NSN: 8405-99-342-4195 DMC: CG) and they come in 33 sizes.

However, what Service personnel wear is a matter for their respective chain of command.

Check with yours to see if MTP shorts are permitted and, if so, request an issue within your sub-unit.

“It’s a rather sweaty affair”

‘WHAT’S THE KEY TO GETTING HELP FROM AMEY?’

● I RECENTLY locked myself out of my Service family accommodation (SFA) – it was entirely my own fault.

I called the Amey helpdesk, who recommended I find a local locksmith using the internet. I did this and paid the required fee to regain entry to my house.

However, I’d like to know why Amey don’t have any duty of care in situations like these?

I checked their website but could not see any clear direction and I recall a few months ago one of my neighbours was helped out by the company in similar circumstances. – **Name and address supplied**

Kieron Mullen, Deputy Head Estate Services, Defence Infrastructure Organisation, replies: Under the National Housing Prime contract (NHP), occupants are responsible for

damage to accommodation caused by negligence or through an accident – and lost keys are included.

The policy is set out in the Amey guidance section on the NHP website.

If you lose your keys and cannot access the property, it is your responsibility to resolve the situation, and to keep the home secure.

In many cases occupants elect to carry out repairs independently, but if they call the Amey helpdesk the operative may offer a repair with a set rate if available.

Agreement would be sought from the occupant during the call.

If granted, the repair will be raised and the tenant required to sign for the charges which are then recovered by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation. This is almost certainly what occurred with your neighbour.

BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know



APPOINTMENTS

Lt Gen Ralph Wooddisse has been appointed Commander Field Army, succeeding Lt Gen Ivan Jones, who has retired after a 35-year career in the Service.



DIARY

May 19: Imperial War Museum Duxford fully reopens to the public with all hangars and indoor exhibitions open to visitors. Visit iwm.org.uk

May 22: Following Mental Health Awareness Week, Imperial War Museum Duxford hosts its first flying day of the season. The event, entitled Standing Together, will focus on educating and informing people about issues relating to mental wellbeing. Visit iwm.org.uk

June: A series of free online talks on a variety of topics at the National Army Museum, Chelsea. Subjects covered range from the Napoleonic campaigns to the Falklands War and more besides. Further details at nam.ac.uk

June 6: Celebrating D-Day at Imperial War Museum Duxford. Vintage ground activities and living history groups will bring the 1940s to life with the chance for visitors to learn more about this remarkable Second World War seaborne invasion. Vintage aircraft also take to the skies. Visit iwm.org.uk

June 20: Thank You Dads at Imperial War Museum Duxford. Fathers and father figures will be celebrated at this themed flying day, complete with crazy golf and displays of contemporary, vintage and military aircraft. Visit iwm.org.uk

July 24: Tiger Day 15 at the Tank Museum, Bovington. A chance to see history's most infamous tank, plus other Second World War-era armour, in action. All remaining tickets for the event – which was postponed from June – were due on sale as this issue went to press. For more details visit tankmuseum.org.

From September 12: Foe to Friend – an exhibition at the National

Army Museum, Chelsea, examining the UK's 75-year presence in Germany. The free showcase includes stories from troops and explores the changing relationship between the two countries since 1945. For more details visit nam.ac.uk



CAREERS

Baseline UK is an innovative resettlement service tailored for the needs of Forces personnel and veterans. The company offers free membership to those with a military background. Benefit from a professional network, hints, tips and training. For more details visit baselineuk.org

Veterans into Logistics CIC is a not-for-profit organisation based in Greater Manchester dedicated to training and supporting ex-military personnel for new careers within the transport and logistics industry. Visit veteransintologistics.org.uk

The Recruit for Spouses coaching programme, which helps Army partners get back into employment, has received a funding boost to reach more husbands and wives. To apply for a six-week course of one-hour sessions email coaching@recruitforspouses.co.uk

Forces Families Jobs is a new platform designed to help partners into meaningful employment. Visit forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk to see the site, which is free to advertise on for employers who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant.



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soldierscharity.org

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Armed Forces Christian Union:
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afcu.org.uk

Armed Forces Muslim Association:
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afma.org.uk

Armed Services Advice Project:
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adviceasap.org.uk

Army Families Federation:
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mil 94391 2324;
aff.org.uk

Army LGBT Forum:
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chair@armylgbt.org.uk

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Army Ornithological Society:
armybirding.org.uk

Army Welfare Service:
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army.mod.uk/welfare-support

Big White Wall, now **Togetherall:**
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Blesma, The Limbless Veterans:
020 8590 1124;
blesma.org

Blind Veterans UK:
(formerly St Dunstan's)
020 7723 5021;
blindveterans.org.uk

Care After Combat:
careaftercombat.org

Career Transition Partnership:
020 7469 6661

Children's Education Advisory Service:
01980 618244;
dcyp-ceas-enquiries@mod.uk

Combat Stress:
24-hour mental health helpline for Service personnel and their families
0800 323 4444;
combatstress.org.uk

Erskine:
0141 814 4569;
erskine.org.uk

Family Escort Service:
020 7463 9249

Felix Fund – the bomb disposal charity:
07713 752901;
felixfund.org.uk

Forcesline:
UK – 0800 731 4880;
Germany – 0800 1827 395;
Cyprus – 080 91065;
Falklands – #6111;
from operational theatres –
Paradigm Services *201; from
anywhere in the world (CSL operator

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Forces Pension Society:
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forcespensionsocietys.org

Help for Heroes:
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helpforheroes.org.uk

Heroes Welcome:
heroeswelcome.co.uk

HighGround:
highground-uk.org.uk
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Humanist, Atheist and Non-religious in Defence network:
defencehumanists.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office:
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Medal Office:
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Mutual Support (multiple sclerosis group):
mutual-support.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:
24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853;
ngvfa.org.uk

Poppyscotland:
0131 557 2782;
poppyscotland.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Association:
0121 236 0058;
rfea.org.uk

Remount: 01451 850 341;
remount.net

Royal British Legion:
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britishlegion.org.uk

Royal British Legion Scotland:
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legionscotland.org.uk

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre:
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rbli.co.uk

Scottish Veterans' Residences:
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svronline.org

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services:

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spaces.org.uk

SSAFA: 0845 1300 975;
ssafa.org.uk

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stoll.org.uk

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nfassociation.org

The Poppy Factory:
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poppyfactory.org

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starandgarter.org

The Veterans Charity:
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troopaid@icloud.com;
troopaid.info

uk4u Thanks!:
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uk4u.org

Veterans Welfare Service:
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0044 1253 866043 (from overseas);
gov.uk/government/groups/veterans-welfare-service

WVRS: 02920 232 668



ROADSHOWS

These events may be subject to delay or cancellation due to the coronavirus pandemic – check relevant websites

The Forces Pension Society is staging a number of roadshows as well as FAR (financial aspects of resettlement) briefings. See forcespensionsociety.org/news-events/events for the latest dates.

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WIN

TEN details have been changed in this picture of aspiring corporals being put to the test on the eight-week section commanders' battle course run by the Infantry Battle School in Brecon.

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 949, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU with your full contact details, including email address, by no later than May 28.

A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted. The first correct entry drawn after the closing date will win this stylish wireless charging stand that rejuvenates three devices at once.

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A second Qi pad is smaller and aimed at charging an AirPods, while the third one is specific to the Apple Watch. Visit stmgoods.com

The winner's name will appear in the July issue. All the usual competition rules apply.

March's winner: LCpl Rands, Dalton Barracks, Oxon.



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P64
GAMES



» Even just sitting in the thing made me feel special. The stitching in the leather, the perfectly knurled switches that are weighty and feel like they'd be impossible to snap, the silence and the smell all combine to make you feel like you've arrived before you've even left.

Drive this car slowly and you'll receive a 4D demonstration in ride quality. It's utterly compliant, no crashing suspension or tracking steering and, despite the firmness, zero creaks or groans in the cabin.

Drive it as fast as you can, and the lesson only intensifies. There's the potential to reach 190mph, while runs of 0 to 60 can be perfected in just 3.6 seconds.

But the C4S is so much more than just numbers in a brochure, and driving one at speed

felt as safe as it did addictive.

The PDK dual-clutch automatic gearbox is never in the wrong cog and the four-wheel steering allows you to tuck into corners with outrageous pace. Dynamic systems are on hand to keep things in check should you become overdrawn in the talent department.

Before I was an old motoring journalist, I was a young lance corporal. I used to book test drives in cars I couldn't afford and then write them up as reviews to send to car magazines.

The Porsche helped change my life back in 2003 when I sent my appraisal to one such title and got a sniff of interest.

My recent time in the C4S proves that it wasn't a one-off experience – every single drive in a 911 is special.

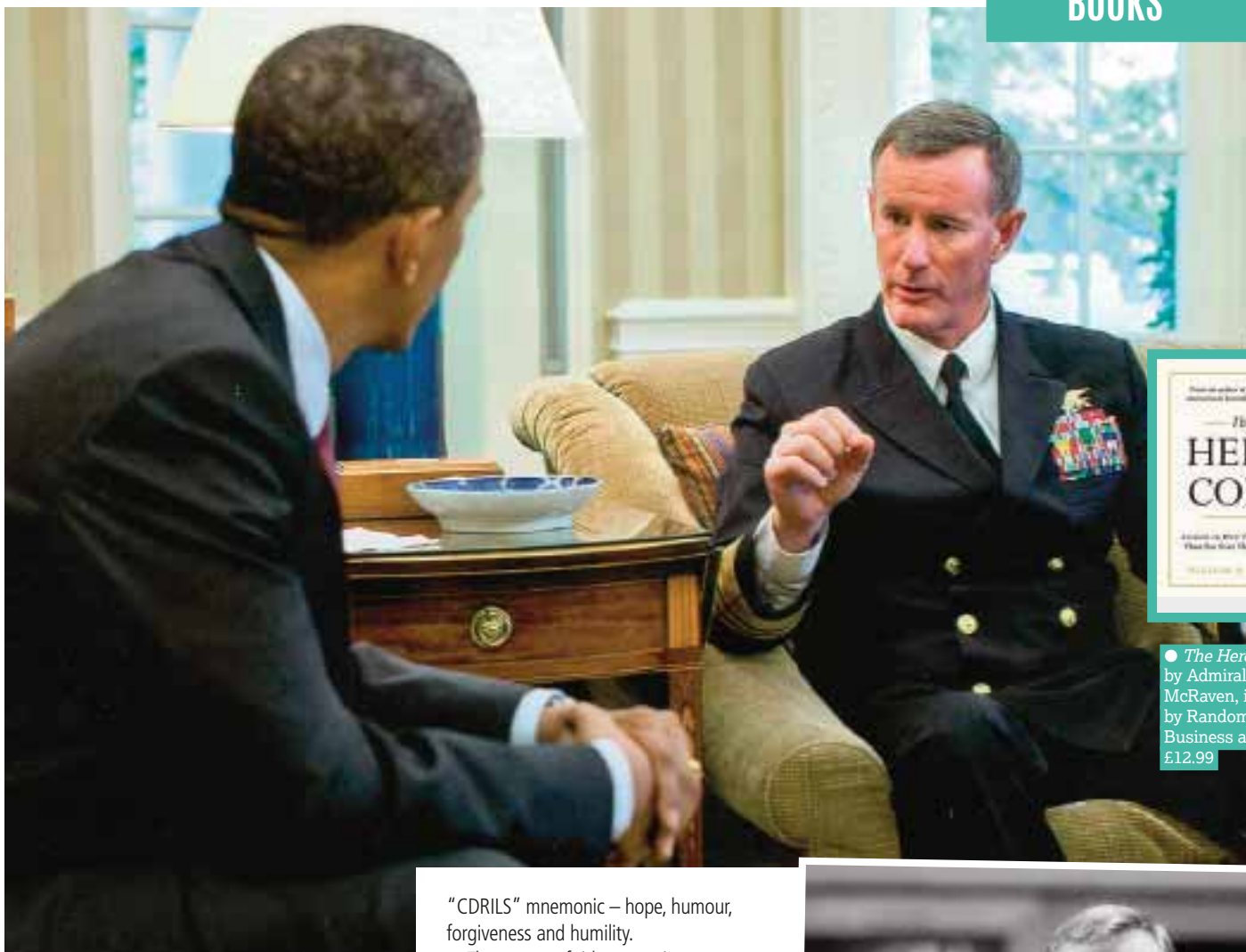
If you've ever looked at a car that costs

£100,000, like this one does, and wondered how on earth it could be worth so much the answer is simple – quality.

That's the best way to describe the Porsche 911. There are of course other words I could use, but most of them are unprintable. ■

VERDICT:
Motoring
perfection –
inside and out
★★★★★

REVIEW: JOHN HOGAN, EX-RE



● *The Hero Code*, by Admiral William McRaven, is published by Random House Business and priced £12.99

PICK OF THE MONTH:

THE HERO CODE

Leadership lessons from across the pond

➤ BEST known outside of the US special forces community for his earlier book *Make Your Bed*, ex-Navy Seal and retired four-star admiral, William McRaven (above with Barack Obama), is back with more advice on how to achieve greatness.

While his previous offering focused on how seemingly small daily habits can help build a positive mindset, *The Hero Code* sets out ten characteristics of successful leadership. Each trait is then illustrated by his own experiences and interactions with some of the extraordinary people he encountered during his 37-year career.

His ethos is pretty simple and in many ways not too dissimilar to the British Army's values and standards, yet he adds a few extras on top of our

"CDRILS" mnemonic – hope, humour, forgiveness and humility.

These sorts of titles sometimes come across as senior officers spinning dits just to make money.

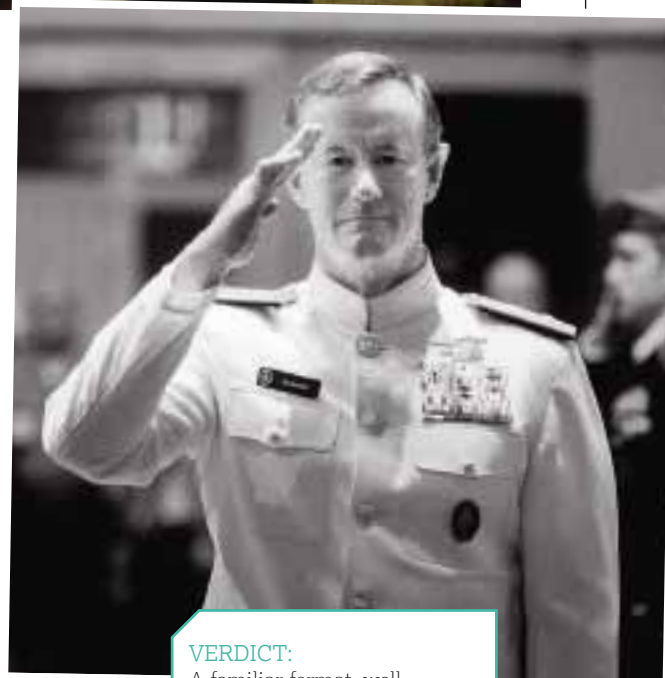
However, McRaven has some insightful stories and certainly the right CV to be an authority on command – for example, during his final assignment as head of US special ops he oversaw the raid that led to the death of Osama bin Laden.

And anyone familiar with his now famous commencement speech to graduates of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology – the address on which *Make Your Bed* was based – will know he has the ability to inspire.

The Hero Code may be another addition to the already saturated military mindset genre, but it does offer some easy-to-digest advice from a seasoned veteran that any soldier with leadership responsibilities could put into practice.

Don't just buy it so that people will see it on your bookshelf, though.

Read it, actively apply it and do better by those under your command. ■



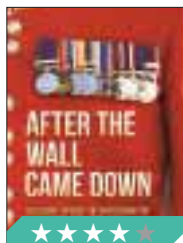
VERDICT:

A familiar format, well executed

★★★★★

REVIEW: WO2 MIKE OWENS, RE

BOOK RELEASES



After the Wall Came Down

by Andrew Richards

THE years that followed the end of the Cold War are arguably unprecedented in British Army history. This is an absorbing analysis of what it was like to serve during the most intense series of operations since the Second World War. Using veteran accounts, the narrative describes what was surely one of the Service's most exciting and turbulent periods. It is an insightful review of the cultural shifts, the impact of almost continuous overseas deployments and the disruption created by ever-changing policies.

Mike Peters, ex-AAC



Blood, Metal and Dust

by Brig (Retd) Ben Barry

THIS is the most comprehensive overview of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan I have read, covering the major battles and military decisions, political policies and goals, as well as insights into the key personnel involved. The book's real selling point is the author's knowledge and analysis – presented in a way that is engaging and easy to digest despite the detail. Brig Barry is a subject matter expert, having written the official British military account of the conflict in Iraq, and this shows throughout. A beast of a book, but highly recommended.

Sgt Adam Jackson, Para



Two Minutes to Midnight

by Roger Hermiston

A TUMULTUOUS time in world history, 1953 was a year of many notable events – the death of Stalin, Winston Churchill's failing health and the discovery of DNA to name a few. These are the starting points for this thoroughly researched book, which delves into those crucial 12 months to explore several surprising episodes that may not have been well known at the time. Loosely based around each month, it is a well written account of an era that is still impacting the world today. A recommended read for those wanting to understand the current state of affairs.

Andrew Cranston, ex-REME

GAMES

LATEST RELEASES



Republic Commando For Switch

IF YOU find the section commander's battle course (page 30) professionally appealing, this *Star Wars*-themed squad-based

shooter will likely make for happy downtime. Fighting at the outset of the saga's Clone Wars, players assume command of a four-strong team charged with fighting the droid-dominated units of the Trade Federation. With each of the Republic troopers skilled in different disciplines – including sniping and demolitions – orders are issued via an interface that is mercifully simple to use in the heat of battle. While this is a remix of a 2005 console title, *Republic Commando*, it is still a great game and makes a highly credible port to the Nintendo Switch. The music and overall ambience remain and the plot is credible enough for fans. Multiplayer options would have improved the package but, for under £15, this one is well worth the asking price.

Cliff Caswell, Soldier



El Hijo For PS4, Xbox One, Switch

A PISTOL is usually a prerequisite for a wild west tour – but players assuming the role of the pint-sized

partner in this stealth outing will find themselves with little more than wits alone. Shunning the cliché of the Colt 45-wielding cowboy, success in *El Hijo* requires players to use their cunning as they step into the boots of a child looking for his missing mum. Progress relies on using the shadows of impressive 3D environments in the same way as Metal Gear's *Solid Snake*. Unlike his Japanese counterpart, however, the youngster has neither tech nor the ability to snap necks to assist. Thus, this effectively boils down to increasingly difficult episodes of running and hiding. While fun for a while, it soon proves frustrating for those less committed to the cause.

Cliff Caswell, Soldier



WRC9 For Switch

HAVING recently been released on full-sized consoles, the latest incarnation of this racing

mainstay remains impressive in its transfer to Nintendo's machine. The behind-the-wheel experience is smooth although the graphics are understandably more limited compared to the Xbox and PlayStation versions. Meanwhile, gameplay is solid in both TV and handheld modes while the learning curve is mercifully forgiving. All-in-all this remains a great game on the Switch, with the added bonus that you can keep it in your kit and play on the move.

WO1 Al Brewer, RLC



Evil Genius 2 For PC

LURKING in a lair while surrounded by an array of tech will probably sound familiar to anyone who has been working from home during the pandemic – but

this real-time strategy outing takes the experience to a whole new level. *Evil Genius 2* allows players to play one of three James Bond-esque criminal masterminds – each with their own strengths and weaknesses – before choosing an appropriate base from which to embark on a world domination campaign. Practical necessities – such as accommodation for minions and vaults of ill-gotten gains – need to be squared away before the nefarious plans are hatched. Aspiring kingpins can then turn their attention to the business in hand. The format might be well-trodden – although games of this type are uncommon these days – but the visuals are first rate, the tutorial blends seamlessly into the main plot and the leftfield humour is great fun. All in all, it is well worth a look – particularly in a reality that has the ring of an Ian Fleming plot.

Cliff Caswell, Soldier

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Based on the traditional Gurkha recruitment race set in the Himalayas, this is a 5km run with a twist and sees participants choose from three weights for their Doko baskets - 5kg, 10kg, and 15kg, all of which are provided.

The Challenge is to complete the course carrying your chosen weighted Doko basket in a time of 46 minutes. Whether you beat the time or not, a deliciously chilled beer and well-earned medal will be waiting for you at the finish line.

SOLDIER SPORT

FINAL PUSH



ROWER LCpl Steve Cox (RLC) will compete in three World Cup races as he looks to qualify for this year's Olympics. The soldier almost quit the sport following the Covid-19 outbreak but chose to return to the boat and chase his dream. See pages 68-69 for more...





BACK FROM THE BRINK

AFTER ALMOST CALLING TIME ON HIS GAMES BID, ROWING ACE RETURNS TO THE BOAT FOR QUALIFYING PUSH

WHEN the Covid-19 outbreak resulted in a national lockdown in March last year, rower LCpl Steve Cox (RLC) was on the brink of walking away from his Olympic dream.

The 29-year-old was in peak condition and primed for the trials that would hopefully secure his place as Zimbabwe's entrant in the single skulls for the Tokyo Games.

But as the crisis worsened, the showdown with his two home-country rivals was shelved, leaving the athlete with one of the most difficult decisions he had faced in both his sporting and military careers.

"This all happened just a week before the final selection was due to be made," Cox, who has served in the Army for seven years, told *SoldierSport*.

"I was in really good shape for racing and was the strong favourite – I was ten seconds faster than my nearest rival, which is a big margin in rowing.

"At that point I almost quit. I was not sure if the Olympics would even happen and didn't know if I could keep putting my Service career on hold.

"I've been promoted to corporal three times but have not been able to complete the command, leadership and management programme due to my rowing commitments.

"On a scale of one to ten, with ten representing quitting and zero staying on, I'd say I was at around seven."

However, after consulting with his chain of command Cox elected to return to the boat and, fast forward more than 12 months, he will finally face what has become an eagerly anticipated qualifying process.

As this issue went to press, the soldier was in action in the first of three World Cup events alongside his fellow Zimbabweans – with the top performing individual securing the coveted Games spot.

"The boat has qualified, but the athlete has not yet been selected," he explained.

"It has been a bit awkward as I used to race with one of those guys in the doubles.

"The aim was to qualify that boat in 2019 so we could avoid this situation; to do that we had to finish in the top seven, but we were tenth.

"But this is my dream, so I have to press on and get the job done. I'm only going to be able to do this for a certain amount of time; rowing is a sport that takes its toll on your body and I have a career to think about as well – I cannot afford to take any prisoners."

With the decision to continue made, Cox – along with coach Karl Offord – set about improvising a home training programme that allowed him to maintain his fitness levels amid the strict protocols imposed during the national lockdown.

"I was averaging around 250 kilometres on the rowing machine every week," the soldier explained. "That was on top of weight training and gym work; I also did a lot of cycling.

"At the end of the first lockdown I had taken seven seconds off my two-kilometre personal best on the rowing machine, which also proved to be a new national record."

While progress was made on dry land, the athlete was not able to return to the water on a consistent basis until the start of this year, when he was



**"I HAVE
TO PRESS
ON AND
GET THE
JOB
DONE"**

offered use of a private lake in Caversham, near Reading.

While rowing machines deliver an obvious fitness boost, it is in the boat where rowers really hone their craft – a point Cox was eager to emphasise.

"When you see rowers on the television, they make it look like one of the easiest things in the world," he added.

"But there are so many elements to it, and you definitely suffer with skill fade if you're off the water for a period of time.

"I was terrible when I first went back and was thinking 'have I made the right decision in carrying on'. However, after two weeks of intensive coaching I was back to where I used to be and I'm now at the same speed as I was before."

With training going well Cox is feeling confident ahead of the World Cup and believes he is in pole position to cement his Games place.

"Unless my rivals have made big changes I should be confirmed in the boat," he explained. "But it is an odd feeling as I have not raced anyone for so long.

"They try not to put stuff on social media, so I haven't got a clue what they've been doing in terms of training.

"To qualify would mean everything. I started rowing when I was 12 and it has always been my goal. I know I'm not quick enough to medal, unless I have the race of my life, but my aim will be to make the B final and finish in the top 12." ■



RESERVE STRENGTH

HAVING seen his first year as head of the newly formed Army Reserve weightlifting squad decimated by the Covid-19 pandemic, Cpl Shane Caswell (R Anglian) is looking to make up for lost time.

Around 20 soldiers have expressed an interest in testing themselves with the set-up and they were due to pick up the pace at the start of this year before the third national lockdown put their plans on hold.

However, with restrictions now easing Caswell is hoping to generate some momentum when the athletes make their return to the gym.

"I'm still in contact with a lot of the guys," the 30-year-old told *SoldierSport*. "We are looking to run some workshops and develop new lifters."

"The aim is to push them towards the full Army team. We want to get as many people involved as possible; I stumbled across the sport completely by accident and I think the Reserves could be an untapped resource."

Those joining the fold will have an inspirational figurehead in Caswell, a former Regular in 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment who served on Op Herrick and Op Newcombe in a ten-year career before joining the Reserves.

Hailing from a background in CrossFit, he migrated to weightlifting in 2019 and has made rapid strides since.

"Initially, I got involved to supplement my training, and I didn't do too badly," he explained. "So I kept going and found myself at a level where I could compete."

"Being in the Infantry for ten years meant my fitness levels were good and having a background in CrossFit ensured it was a natural transition."

"Unfortunately, the Inter-Services were cancelled in 2020 but I finished fifth at the English Championships in February and have declared an interest in qualifying for the Commonwealth Games."

"That sort of progress usually takes six to eight years, but the strength and long training history of Infantry soldiers really lends itself to weightlifting."

Caswell, who features in the under-73kg category and has personal bests of 101kg in the snatch and 133kg in the clean and jerk, has been competing in the virtual realm during the pandemic, with his efforts filmed and submitted to event organisers for final ratification.

And he hopes the return of physical competitions will offer a further boost to his progress.

"The main focus for this year is to have an in-person Inter-Services Championships," he said.

"The online contests are so different. In a real competition you have 11 teammates supporting you, the other Services are watching on and there is a lot of noise and atmosphere."

"Those extra kilograms feel so much heavier when you're lifting on your own at home." ■





GOWIN LOOKS LONG TERM AS EURO TEST LOOMS

PISTOL shooter Sgt Sam Gowin (RA) has told *SoldierSport* that Olympic qualification will be a “big ask” when he takes aim at this month’s European Championships in Croatia.

The Team GB athlete, a relative newcomer to the sport, will cement his participation in the Games if he finishes as the highest ranked entrant yet to receive a quota place – a feat he admits will be a tall order.

“The other competitors have been shooting for much longer than I have,” he explained. “So I cannot really expect anything, or get my hopes up.

“I have to be rational about where I am now. I was painfully close at the last European Championships; I was in fourth place going into the final round but finished 15th after some low shots – that sucked.

“The Paris Olympics in 2024 is a more realistic goal – I don’t know of any other shooter who became an Olympian within

three years of starting out.”

The 31-year-old made his long-awaited return to action at the World Cup showdown in India in March – his first event in more than 12 months – and will face a further test in the series when he travels to Baku after the European Championships.

When Covid-19 took hold the soldier was reduced to dry training at home, with access to live-firing ranges limited to just two two-week windows.

“It was a chance to focus on the basics,” Gowin said. “I was concentrating on how I come onto the target, without the distractions of scores and what other competitors were doing.

“I was also using spreadsheets to highlight the deviations in my shots, which gave me a better picture of how well I’ve been doing.

“When I got back on the ranges I was feeling stronger and was more consistent than ever before. I was very happy



**“IT
WAS A
CHANCE
TO
FOCUS
ON THE
BASICS”**

with the outcomes and could really notice the difference after that training.”

Returning to the international stage proved to be a welcome next step and Gowin secured an eighth-place finish in India – an effort that saw him rise to 18th in the world rankings.

“I was fuelled by excitement,” he explained. “Just taking off on the plane made me smile.

“I was nervous for a few days before the competition, but I like to have that feeling.

“We were using ammunition which in the UK feels brilliant, but out there it felt like I had a mini shotgun in my hand – it was that powerful.

“I’m assuming that was due to the temperature. I had never shot in conditions like that before, which makes international events and training camps so important.

“That is exactly the kind of information and experience I need if I’m going to continue to improve as an athlete.” ■

SPORT SHORTS



Picture: Allan McKenzie/SWpix.com

Hull move for Army star

RUGBY League giants Hull FC have returned to the Army's playing pool in a bid to boost their Super League hopes.

The Black and Whites have handed a one-year deal to Gnr Miteli Vulikijapani (RA) following a successful trial in a move that mirrors the one made by Pte Ratu Naulago (Yorks) in 2019, who enjoyed a stellar two-year spell with the club before crossing codes to join Bristol Bears.

As well as representing the Army in rugby union, the soldier has also featured for Harlequins and Saracens.

"I'm really looking forward to the challenge of testing myself in rugby league and putting my skills to use in this sport," Vulikijapani said.

Read a full interview with the player in next month's issue.



Picture: Cpl Becky Brown, RLC

Roberts dazzles on debut

ARMY star SSgt Carrie Roberts (REME) enjoyed a debut to remember as she crossed for a hat-trick of tries as St Helens thrashed Bradford in the Women's Super League.

The soldier's efforts were among the many highlights of an 86-0 victory for the rugby league outfit in the competition's opening round.

Elsewhere, Sgt Vicky Lea (AGC (RMP)) and LBdr Jess McAuley (RA) have been selected in the Welsh women's rugby league training squad ahead of June's match with England.

BACK ON COURSE

GOLF was one of the first Army sports to resume after the first lockdown last year and it is again leading the charge with corps-level contests set to take place in the coming weeks.

Provided there are no changes to step three of the government's roadmap plan, scheduled for May 17, players from the Royal Engineers and Infantry will take to the tee on May 27 for their first taste of competitive action in 2021.

The Sappers will host their spring meeting at Tidworth Garrison Golf Club and secretary SSgt Barrie Green told *SoldierSport* there is a sense of excitement in the air after it was given the go-ahead by the Army Sport Control Board.

"We are champing at the bit," he added. "Everyone is looking forward to it and we will try to get the majority of the season in."

"We should have more than 40 people coming along and there will be competitions for everyone from the elite level down."

"I'm sure it will be hotly contested, and it will be a good opportunity to scout talent for the corps and Army teams."

The Infantry Championships will be staged at St Anne's Old Links Golf Course, in Lancashire, on the same day and secretary Capt Neil Williams (Lancs) said he has been inundated with players wanting to get involved – with more than 100 signing up.

"People are itching to get out again," he explained. "It will be our season opener and from here we will look to develop players for the Army Stroke and Match Play Championships later in the year."

"We will also use this event as part of our selection process for the Inter-Corps Championships. The Infantry has a very strong team and has won that competition for the past three years – we want to make it four in a row." ■



- FURTHER guidance on the resumption of Army sport is available in **ABN 036/2021**.

The document confirms that representative activity will not return until May 17 at the earliest and must be authorised by Army Headquarters following recommendation by the Army Sport Control Board.

Sports will only resume in accordance with government, devolved administration and national governing body guidelines, as well as the force health protection instruction – with Covid-19 risk assessments required for each site.



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When it was announced that my battalion – 3 Rifles – was going on Covid taskings, we were moved from Edinburgh to Grantham for training, and then on to many different UK locations. The people behind this effort in **command and control** have my respect for their professionalism.

LCpl Curtis Horbury, Rifles



I think it would have to be **my wife** – she's definitely my inspiration. The whole Covid scenario has been hard on a lot of people but she has been my go-to person throughout it all. We have a two-year-old child too and she's a great mum.

LCpl Chris Smith, R Welsh



Footballer Jesse Lingard. His mum recently got diagnosed with depression and he was left to look after his siblings, as well as his own child. I also read that he has been going through his own mental health problems – yet he is probably one of the most in-form players in the Premier League right now. It just shows how you can still excel in your career, even when you have personal dramas going on.

LCpl Tate Sessions, RRF



While I've been helping on Covid-related taskings with the Army, **my sister** has been working in a care home – she's been there throughout the pandemic and is a real inspiration to me. It's been a demanding time for her and her colleagues.

LCpl Joe Ramsden, R Anglian



I have been really impressed with our **colleagues in the NHS**, not just during the pandemic, but in all they do day-to-day. As an instructor at the **Infantry Battle School** in Brecon it has also been great to see the way the team here has pulled together to keep delivering training.

CSjt Robert Hamilton, Rifles

England's **Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty**, quietly and selflessly leading by example, helping to treat Covid patients on wards in hospitals during the Christmas weekend.

Maj Tony Bryant, RRF



Leading by example

We asked troops who has inspired them recently

Prof Yuval Noah Harari, the Israeli author and historian. He has such a wealth of experience and I am enjoying his book *Sapiens*. But in particular I find his thoughts on globalism, and how it leads to better solutions to the world's problems than nationalism, really inspiring.

Fus Alexander Kwilecki, RRF





LEVEL PEAKS

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